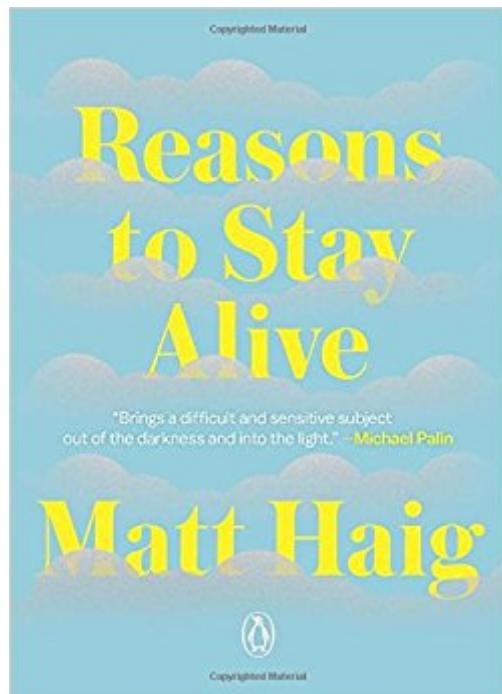


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# Reasons To Stay Alive



## Synopsis

Matt Haig's accessible and life-affirming memoir of his struggle with depression, and how his triumph over the illness taught him to live. From the author of *How To Stop Time*, coming February 2018 from Viking. "Destined to become a modern classic." •Entertainment Weekly Like nearly one in five people, Matt Haig suffers from depression. *Reasons to Stay Alive* is Matt's inspiring account of how, minute by minute and day by day, he overcame the disease with the help of reading, writing, and the love of his parents and his girlfriend (and now-wife), Andrea. And eventually, he learned to appreciate life all the more for it. Â Everyone's lives are touched by mental illness: if we do not suffer from it ourselves, then we have a friend or loved one who does. Matt's frankness about his experiences is both inspiring to those who feel daunted by depression and illuminating to those who are mystified by it. Above all, his humor and encouragement never let us lose sight of hope. Speaking as his present self to his former self in the depths of depression, Matt is adamant that the oldest clichÃ© is the truest—there is light at the end of the tunnel. He teaches us to celebrate the small joys and moments of peace that life brings, and reminds us that there are always reasons to stay alive.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Named one of Entertainment Weekly's Must-Read Books of 2016Finalist for the Waterstone's Book of the Year"Destined to become a modern classic." - ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY "An in-depth exploration of Haig's battle with depression, if you need a pick-me-up on a very fundamental level, you could do a lot worse than this

book." - PEOPLE "I dog-eared 45 pages in Haig's compact book where he wrote profound or poignant things. I could have easily marked more of them." - Jim Higgins, THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL "Wonderful and essential" - Christopher Weir, THE HUFFINGTON POST "a quick, witty and at times profound take on an illness many people suffer from, but sometimes can't bring themselves to talk about." - THE MINNEAPOLIS STAR-TRIBUNE "Things just got real. His honest • and surprisingly funny • first person account is a reminder that no matter how hopeless life may seem, it really never is." - NY METRO "A scintillating read." - THE DAILY MAIL "REASONS TO STAY ALIVE is essential reading for anyone who has dealt with depression and for anyone who loves someone with the disease." - BOOK REPORTER "Fascinating and beautifully written." - IAN RANKIN "Brings a difficult and sensitive subject out of the darkness and into the light." - MICHAEL PALIN "Matt Haig is astounding." - STEPHEN FRY "Maybe the most important book I've read this year" - SIMON MAYO "A life-saving book" - AMANDA CRAIG "Matt Haig uses words like a tin-opener. We are the tin" - JEANETTE WINTERSON "Brings a difficult and sensitive subject out of the darkness and into the light" - MICHAEL PALIN "Thoughtful, honest and incredibly insightful" - JENNY COLGAN "Brilliant and salutary . . . should be on prescription" - REV. RICHARD COLES "A vibrant, encouraging depiction of a sinister disorder." KIRKUS REVIEW "Warm and engaging, and shot through with humour...a valuable contribution to the conversation." - THE SUNDAY TIMES Praise for *How To Stop Time* "Matt Haig's latest book, *How To Stop Time*, is marvelous in every sense of the word. Clever, funny, poignant, and written with Haig's trademark blend of crystalline prose and deft storytelling, this is a book that stirs the heart and mind in equal measure. A hugely enjoyable read." - Deborah Harkness author of *The All Souls Trilogy* "Compelling and full of life's big questions, *How To Stop Time* is a book you will not be able to put down." - Graeme Simsion, author of *The Rosie Project* "The narrator is 400 years old, but the sardonic asides give this pacy novel a modern twist. Matt Haig has designs on our heartstrings . . . The energy and zip of this book are hard to resist." - The Guardian "Matt Haig is astounding." - Stephen Fry

Matt Haig is the internationally bestselling writer of six novels, including the forthcoming *How To Stop Time*. He has also written award-winning children's books. His work has been translated into thirty languages. *Reasons to Stay Alive*, a bestseller in the UK since its publication, is his first work of nonfiction.

Have you ever had a book that you were simultaneously unable to wait for and very scared of reading? That was Matt Haig's Reasons to Stay Alive [Matt is the author of The Humans, which you should ALL know by now that I LOVE]. I'm sure you can tell from the title a little of what it's about, and you may or may not have been able to guess why I was nervous to read it. I am depressed. I have depression. I am a depressive. Do you know how terrified I am to say that? Petrified. But I'm going to say it because it will make it that much more clear why I needed and appreciated this book. From the very moment I heard about it, I needed it. I read this entire book in roughly 4.5 hours. I devoured it. I also cried more than I have probably EVER cried while reading a book. But I also smiled. Maybe not a lot, but it happened. The synopsis says "It's also an upbeat, joyous and very funny exploration of how to live better, love better, read better and feel more." I was pleased to find that to be very true. I felt a lot reading this book. I like that Matt mentioned that not everyone's depression is the same, that you can be both happy and sad at the same time ("just as you can be a sober alcoholic"), and how most people will not be able to see it: "To other people, it sometimes seems like nothing at all. You are walking around with your head on fire and no one can see the flames." My heart pounded so HARD in my chest practically the entire time I was reading, just as it is beating hard just writing this all down. Matt said at one point he hoped someone else would read his words and that maybe the pain he felt wasn't for nothing. I know it wasn't for nothing, but THANK YOU, Matt, for writing this book, for being brave and open and honest, for showing me I wasn't alone no matter what the depression told me, for telling me that life will wait for me, for The Humans, for all of your words, for being alive. Let's get down to the bottom line, shall we? Read this book. Read this book because you have emotions and hopes and feelings. Read this book because you are human and because you are alive. Read this book to live. Reasons to Stay Alive is a celebration of life, books, words, and humanity.

This book helped me understand my own struggles, and how we are never alone in our pain. If you too are suffering, or know someone who is reading this, it will help so much more than you think. Thank you, Matt Haig for this.

This book was encouraging to read. Rather than a book telling you reasons to stay alive, Matt Haig shares his experience with crippling anxiety and depression, and his journey through the darkest times. What I loved was the ability to relate to what he feels. I too deal with anxiety and depression.

It can feel so isolating, but books like this remind me that I am not alone.

I enjoyed reading Matt's book on his experience of going through depression; it's part autobiography, part self-help manual - there is very much a sense of the author putting things back in place, mapping out the topography of his own mind and discovering a place where he can comfortably be himself. By putting it all down on paper, he is exorcising the demons in the darkness by exposing them to the light of public examination. As someone who has also been through the experience of depression for many years and has also arrived at incredibly similar conclusions after coming out the other side, I recognise completely the numb, bleak, monochromatic existence that he describes; the endless days ahead, the wasted days behind. The inability to realise that you have an impact on others, that you even matter. That anything matters. But it was this that made the 'depression years' in the book seem almost as turgid and endless as going through the experience again for real; by the 80th page, I really was feeling bleak; I started to recognise that familiar 'me me me' narrative that so bored me about myself when I was depressed and talking about it with friends, and reading the book itself almost became like a microcosm of battling with depression itself: were things really going to get better? Would I really start enjoying this book before it was too late? What was wrong with me for not feeling the same joyous giddiness that all the celebs on the covers evidenced in their soundbite quotes? Was I hateful for writing a less-than-glowing review of Matt's very personal and revealing book, risking hurting his feelings for my own subjective self-satisfaction? Even though this opening part of the book was bleak and uncomfortable to read, I accepted it for what it was and struggled through, adopting the maxim that sometimes, just keeping going is a victory for positivity. There were times when I came close to ending it all and closing the book for good, but - without checking the exact page count - I think the sun finally started to come out after 100 pages. That was too much for me as a depressive to get much out of - it was a hard read; it seemed to be there to function as a 'window into the nightmare' for those who haven't experienced it. They might find it useful, but although cases of depression seem to have similar themes and motifs, they vary in context as much as the sufferers themselves are unique individuals. After that, when the book deals with where his head's at now, it gets easier. But these are things I wanted more detail on - there are lots of lists, and very very short chapters all through this book, which make it easier to pick up and get into - but they also make the reading experience frustratingly insubstantial at times. Maybe there's something to this book leading the advance against the taboo of depression and suicide - if that's the case, then I hope it performs the function of getting it out into the public arena once and for all. There were times, when reading, that I felt that

pang of wonder and dread that comes when you know exactly what the next sentence is going to be - and there are times when that same sensation of knowing felt like something jaded and predictable; similarly, there were times when I felt the tone of the narrative to be a gentle one, speaking great truths, but it also felt at later times like I was a bed-bound patient being ministered by someone with the bedside manner of Alan Titchmarsh; oozing soothingness and calm to a poor ill person. Life has brought me to the same conclusions as Matt, though; that's a sign we're both going the right way. A very thought-provoking read that isn't the magical work of profundity that the publishers seem to want to market it as - that's far too much expectation to have for what is essentially a very humble enterprise; that of an author working through what happened to him in the most natural way possible for him - via his pen. It is a work of kindness, and of good intention; it is a work of reason, and a testament to the powers of the mind; but I feel that it's being hyped into something that the author never intended it to be. This book is useful for those who wish to get an idea of what it feels like to go through depression. It would also be useful to someone in the middle of a depressive episode, I suppose. Personally I was both pleased and disappointed by this book - pleased that we had arrived at almost exactly the same perspective on life, but disappointed that I could therefore only confirm my existing beliefs rather than challenge them and learn something new. Finally, my views on happiness, how to find it, and how to keep it (as Matt finishes in the same way himself):

- 1) All that exists is the moment of 'now'. Everything else - the past and the future - is in your head. Leave the past behind you; it has gone. By being positive in the present moment, you are sowing seeds of good possibilities for the future; there is no need to dwell morbidly on what is yet to happen.
- 2) Being kind to others, and having your actions affect others in a positive way will make all parties a lot happier.
- 3) Diversity of choice produces stress, not happiness. Keep it simple.
- 4) Don't let your mind tell you downers. When you catch yourself having miserable thoughts, take positive action before reinforcing the upbeat, truthful alternative - even if you don't feel like you are.
- 5) Your mind can be trained like a dog. A repeated action becomes a habit after three weeks or so. Acquire positive habits, drop the negative ones.
- 6) Don't judge. It's not as simple as 'succeed' or 'fail'. Just accept and be open to what is.
- 7) Exercise makes the body happy
- 8) **EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT.**
- 9) Your good mood deserves protection - it is fragile and valuable. Your good mood is stronger than the bad mood of others.
- 10) You can always do better tomorrow.
- 11) People feel happier if they have a purpose.
- 12) Everyone's life is different. Everyone comes to terms with their life in their own way. Ultimately I'm a bit disappointed by this book, but I totally recognise the story; I liked it without getting as excited as everyone else seems to be doing.

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