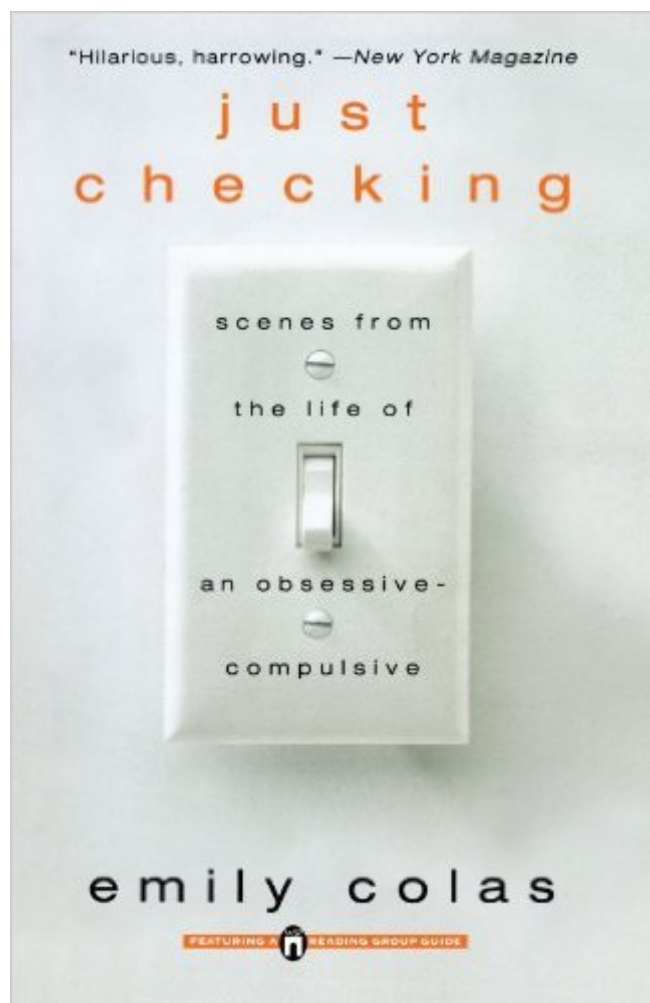


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Just Checking: Scenes From The Life Of An Obsessive-compulsive



Synopsis

As my friend the heroin addict says, "You're only as sick as your secrets." Emily Colas -- young, intelligent, well-educated wife and mother of two -- had a secret that was getting in the way of certain activities. Like touching people. Having a normal relationship with her husband. Socializing. Getting a job. Eating out. Like leaving the house. Soon there was no interval in her life when she was not just checking. This raw, darkly comic series of astonishing vignettes is Emily Colas' achingly honest chronicle of her twisted journey through the obsessive-compulsive disorder that came to dominate her world. In the beginning it was germs and food. By the time she faced the fact that she was really "losing it," Colas had become a slave to her own "hobbies" -- from the daily hair cutting to incessant inspections of her children's clothing for bloodstains. A shocking, hilarious, enormously appealing account of a young woman struggling to gain control of her life, this is Emily Colas' exposé of a soul tormented, but balanced by a buoyance of spirit and a piercing sense of humor that may be her saving grace.

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Customer Reviews

I happened upon the book "Just Checking" sitting on the office 'free book exchange shelf' a co-worker established years ago. Since my daughter struggles with anxiety and OCD (and I struggle to understand her mind), I knew that this tattered looking book was calling out my name. So I picked it up, dusted it off, and took it home to read. Oh, how I loved Emily Colas' honest, intelligent, humorous yet heart wrenching description of her OCD life. We all worry from time to time, but Colas' worries became obsessions that led to compulsive behaviors. Despite the fact that she knew her

behavior to be illogical, she could not stop the worrisome thoughts or fear. Like my daughter, intelligent women don't do well with therapists. Like my daughter, Colas did not want to take the meds. But the realization eventually comes to the intelligent mind that the burden of worrying is overwhelming and that "life's just way to short to bother with such nonsense." The OCD brain needs the meds. "Just Checking" was published in 1998 and I can't help but wonder where Emily Colas is now? I hope she is ok. I hope my daughter will be ok. I hope anyone suffering from anxiety and OCD will find their peace. I, too, count the stars.

Emily Colas' memoir, *Just Checking*, is like an uncomfortable stand-up comedy routine. Broken into small chunks of conversational writing with sometimes interesting, sometimes bewildering headings (for example, "Mussolini Ate His Penie"), Colas' account jumps frantically from past to present, her childhood events to her typical day-to-day life as a wife and mother. It's sometimes hard to follow where exactly we are at any given time--and if that's intentional, I'm not sure it really works. There are some terribly intense, disturbing moments (such as when Colas' apartment fills with garbage and dirt because she becomes wary of cleaning supplies, and she refuses to take a shower for fear of harming her unborn child), but overall the book floats glibly from event to event, nearly discounting Colas' painful descent into the illness. I know that this is was an extremely uncomfortable story to tell, and I like the approach of bringing humor to a subject that normally isn't very funny, but there are times when the writing backs away when it should have really delved deeper.

You will experience great difficulty returning to work. Also, you may exhibit some strange checking behavior while eating your BLT. Exhausting. The guilt I felt in deriving enjoyment from Colas' tale of insanity was tempered only by the recognition that facing the brink is just a matter of degrees. Nearly everyone could find a suitable diagnosis at some point in their lives, whether chemical or situational. Few, however, could find the humor to expose their disturbing mental processes as adeptly as Colas has. I hope that in sharing her story, Emily Colas has derived a great deal of therapeutic benefit. I know I have.

I read this because I'm a psych student, but I think anyone could enjoy it. It's a good book, funny and kind of sad at the same time. The author had a serious disorder but has a good sense of humor about it, and her writing style in this book reflects that. It was interesting and fun to read.

I use this book when I teach my Psy101 course (phobias, OCD and hypochondriasis- I read a few blurbs to illustrate to the class these topics). I always have at least 2 students a semester buy this book because they find her story so interesting. I recommend this for anyone who teaches psychology!

I bought this book SO many years ago because I have some interesting tendencies toward OCD and because a quick peruse of the book made me laugh (i.e., she is funny, not that I was laughing at her). I finally re-picked up this book and read it from front to back. It did not quite live up to its expectations. Emily Colas is writing mini David Sedaris'esque essays on her life. It is somewhat chronological, though often flips between her past and her present, in an effort to make a single point. Some of the essays are funny. Some are sad. Some are enraging or depressing. Emily Colas indulged in her ocd and those around her did the same. She managed a marriage and motherhood despite her rather severe (at least at times) inclinations. Although she appeared toward the end (and in the afterward interview) to have finally made some progress and address the issue (e.g., seeing a doctor; taking medication), it took her a LONG time and a LOT of heartache to get there. I think that this book is probably a good read for people who know people with OCD, to help understand the disease a little better. Colas seems to be pretty (at times, embarrassingly) honest and definitely self-deprecating (i.e., not making things sound better than they actually were) and I think provides a good understanding of those people with the disease who have NOT sought to address the problem. There are certainly amusing moments, and there were definitely stories to which I could relate. Overall, the book just fell a little flat because she was just not particularly likeable and the reader was left frustrated with her lack of willingness to do anything for herself. So, a kind of hit and miss, overall. Not terrible, somewhat useful, somewhat entertaining, and somewhat recommended.

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