

## Author Q&A with Courtney Cook



### **1. Where did the inspiration for *The Way She Feels* come from?**

Writing a book, especially the kind of book that *The Way She Feels* is, wasn't something I consciously set out to do, at least not initially. My mental health has been a constant struggle I've dealt with since I was kid—I can't remember a time where I haven't had anxiety (if such a time ever even existed), first felt depressed at age nine, and entered mental health treatment at age thirteen, which I've continued in some form ever since—so writing essays on the topic began as a way for me to examine the impact mental illness has had on my life.

### **2. If readers take away one thing from reading your book what do you hope that is?**

Ultimately, I hope the book captures that while, yes, I do have borderline personality disorder, more than anything else I'm a relatively "normal" person living a relatively "normal" life (whatever that means). I'm doing my best to work with the hand I was dealt, just like everyone else is, neurotypical or otherwise. I also hope readers understand that *The Way She Feels* is not one-size-fits-all, and my experience with BPD is only my own. While I can't speak for anyone but myself, I hope that my experience helps to humanize the way people view those with BPD as a whole.

### **3. Did anything in the writing of *The Way She Feels* that surprise you?**

I felt so proud of the growth I'd undergone at the time of my writing *The Way She Feels*, and it's absolutely wild to see the growth I've undergone since writing it. It really is a time-capsule filled with things like coping skills I no longer utilize, adoration for a medication I'd never dare take again, and praise for a relationship I don't look back on with much fondness or kindness at all. Having BPD can make it difficult for me to view anything outside of extremes, and I think a past version of myself would be frustrated by the discrepancy between the Courtney in *The Way She Feels* and the Courtney I am presently. But the Courtney I am presently is comfortable with the fact that *The Way She Feels* is a time-capsule, because it's a time-capsule of a really transformative and beautiful time in my life where things made sense in a way they never had before. I now know that multiple truths can exist at once, and I can be proud of *The Way She Feels* Courtney and present Courtney at the same time. They're both doing their best.

And honestly, it's pretty cool to know that I'd write about some things differently nowadays. It means I've grown, and that's something I hope to keep doing forever.

#### **4. What was your favorite book as a child? Who read to you?**

My mom read to me before I could read myself, but I'm drawing a blank on what books we read together that I enjoyed and for some reason can only remember crying for days after we finished *Charlotte's Web* (why did Charlotte have to die!?) and *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume (why did his brother have to eat that turtle!). Which is a bummer because I know I loved reading together and remember begging her often to keep going for "just one more chapter!" when I was supposed to be asleep.

When I began to read on my own, I loved books like *The Doll People* and the *Magic Tree House* series. In middle school, I was really into the *Cirque Du Freak* series and I devoured every *Gossip Girl* book I could get my hands on, a duo I think is still indicative of who I am/my vibe, which a friend recently described as "goth Lilly Pulitzer."

#### **5. What's on your nightstand now?**

*Milk Fed* by Melissa Broder, *Suicidal: Why We Kill Ourselves* by Jesse Bering, *Solutions and Other Problems* by Allie Brosh, and *How to Change Your Mind* by Michael Pollan.