



Allergic to Life: My Battle for Survival, Courage, and Hope

Kathryn Chastain Treat

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Imagine that the very food you eat and the beautiful carpet on your floors start to make you feel violently ill. Your contact lenses cause your eyes to burn and water uncontrollably. Trace amounts of mold on other people's clothing cause you to become unable to hold a thought or get it from your brain to your mouth during an everyday conversation. The life you once knew is gone and you have become a prisoner of unexplainable and severe allergies and sensitivities. In this new life you can no longer shop or visit friends in their homes because there are too many chemicals and fragrances there. You become plagued by one mystery infection after another and no doctor or specialist seems to be able to give you any explanation of what's causing your terrifying symptoms. Depression sets in and becomes your constant companion as you try to cope with the stress of being sick and of struggling to live within your newfound limitations. "Allergic to Life: My Battle for Survival, Courage and Hope" is the story of one woman's journey through a battle to reclaim her life and overcome depression caused by an exposure to toxic mold in her workplace.

Allergic to Life: My Battle for Survival, Courage, and Hope Details

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From Reader Review Allergic to Life: My Battle for Survival, Courage, and Hope for online ebook

A.C. Flory says

I finished this wonderful book a long time ago but the death of its author hit me hard and I couldn't face closing off this last, tenuous connection. Rest in peace, Kathryn. Honoured to have known you.

Jo Robinson says

As someone who suffers from allergies on a hugely smaller scale, I found Kathryn Treat's medical memoir fascinating. First and foremost it is a precise account of her painful journey trying to pinpoint what was making her so very ill, and trying to find treatments to make her well again. Her dealings with various doctors, both wonderful and one not so nice at all, as well as her battle with the health care system was disturbing to read. Her strength in carrying on no matter how painful and terrifying things got shines through, as does her kind heart. There is a very helpful glossary, list of relevant books and resources at the end, putting a lot of information in one place for anyone who suspects or knows that they have allergies. As well as being a very useful medical account, I found this author's account of her life, her struggles, in living in constant illness, foregoing the simple pleasure that most women take for granted as part of their daily lives both poignant and inspiring.

Christopher Antony says

Harrowing, but uplifting, account of living with chronic illness

We can all suffer from allergies, whether it be the irritation of hay fever or the sometimes life threatening reactions to bee stings, but to be allergic to almost everything is a curse not visited on many. The writer of this excellent book is one of that unhappy group. When Kathryn Chastain Treat started a job as a school secretary, she little thought that the level of mould in the atmosphere of her new workplace, would trigger a veritable cannonade of allergic reactions in her body that totally took over her life for more than the next decade.

The account of that unhappy time, together with the stories of her encounters with both good and bad medical practitioners, is the main theme of this book. The reader is drawn into the story of this very unlucky lady and you will find yourself rooting for her to find a cure and put an end to her ordeal.

It is not just a tale of debilitating illness though. Throughout the entire time there were good people, (like her husband), who were acting like constant rocks of support. Also it resulted in the production of this very fascinating book, an absolute "must read" for anyone who wants to understand what it is like to live through the nightmare of almost incurable sickness.

Mischa Van Loder says

Not only is *Allergic to Life: My Battle for Survival, Courage, and Hope* a wonderful resource and reference guide for people who are sensitive to chemicals but it serves to show people what it's like to live a life while sensitive to most everyday substances. It reads like a medical thriller, yet it's also warm and engaging enough for the reader to feel as if they are actually there, experiencing it with the author, Kathryn Treat.

Treat's struggles read true to life and are indicative of the challenges that many people, in 2013 and beyond, will have to face. In some circles it is said that only people who believe in climate change (and our planet's protection and care) believe in environmental illness/chemical sensitivities, yet, it's impossible not to when the impact of this medical condition touches on your own life--or that of someone you care for. This book shows exactly what it is like for those people and their families.

What I liked most were the explanations of the treatments, most especially Dr William Rae's of the Environmental Health Centre, in Dallas (EHC-D). EHC-D is a medical facility whose emphasis is the relationship of health and disease to environmental factors; here is where Treat underwent many treatments that enable her to live a more functional life, today. The way she has managed her condition over the years (and still does) has brought her great success. They haven't cured her but they have paved the way for her to be able to have some exposures without becoming completely disabled, which has lead her into a new appreciation for life, family and joyful hobbies. For someone who was 'allergic' [read, chemically sensitive] to everything, she has come a long way, being able to tolerate so many new things.

For anyone suffering with this condition, this book is a must read, if only because the treatments used by Treat are ones that are actually science-backed, peer-reviewed methods, rather than many of the 'pseudo science' type methods that come in and out of fashion; while many of those methods taking advantage of a subset of society who will do/try almost anything to get well so as to attempt to live life with some semblance of normalcy. With the use and misuse of toxic chemicals rising, this condition is sure to touch the lives of more and more people in the future. For those unlucky souls, Treat's book shines like a beacon of hope on a dark night in stormy seas for anyone who feels lost amongst the mass of information--and misinformation--that's out there.

It really is mind boggling how much of an impact being environmentally ill can have on a person's life. But the way the author has dealt with it and come out of it is a great example of how to survive through such turmoil. It's a fantastic read, one that I'm sure to refer to again in the future. The perfect gift for anyone going through this type of illness; whether that be toxic mould illness, Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), mild chemical sensitivity, allergies or any other immune disorder where foods, chemicals or other environmental factors impact on the health of an individual.

Also something else I've found that's been of help, the author's blog: [allergictolifemybattle](http://allergictolifemybattle.com), where there is a wealth of information and support from the author and like-minded followers.

Stevie Turner says

I bought this book out of interest as I suffer with intolerances to dairy and caffeine, but was unprepared as to the depth of suffering poor Kathryn Chastain Treat has undergone over the last 12 years and is in fact still undergoing, albeit thankfully on a much improved level nowadays.

The multiple allergies she suffers from at their worst debilitated her to the extent where loved ones visiting her house had to cover themselves in special suits so that any moulds or chemicals on their clothing did not

provoke a potentially life-threatening reaction in Kathryn. She had to live apart from her husband in a specially chemical –free house, and undergo hours and hours of energy-sapping testing and medical procedures. Family life suffered, although Kathryn's husband Rick has obviously been a tower of strength and support for her.

Kathryn's indomitable will to live and to eventually recover from her allergies stands her in good stead. She wants so desperately to be 'normal' again and to have a proper family life. Some of the pages are quite heart-breaking to read.

I take my hat off to this lady; what an amazing woman! Kathryn; I wish you health and happiness, and a long life free of suffering. You deserve it.

Susan says

I won this book through Goodreads and found it to be a very detailed and heart-wrenching account of the author's life after being exposed to mold in the workplace. She wrote of her unimaginable medical and legal battles that left me with such admiration for her because of the strength, courage, and determination she showed through one setback after another. Thankfully, she has a wonderful family who has supported her through the years. I highly recommend this book. I had trouble putting it down even though it wasn't always easy to read due to the sadness of her story.

Bette Stevens says

A BEACON OF HOPE! ALLERGIC TO LIFE by Kathryn Chastain Treat is a well-written account of the author's twelve-year war not only to survive, but to win, battle after battle against chronic environmental illnesses. Throughout her journey, Kathryn faces battle fronts from both governmental and healthcare systems as well. ALLERGIC TO LIFE is a well-documented account (including glossary, helpful books and resources) not only of facts, but of feelings. Feelings of a woman who is fighting those seemingly insurmountable battles and of the family, friends, legal professionals and healthcare specialists who stood beside her. As a reader, I have come away with a new found understanding of the people in my own family and community who are fighting their own battles against chronic illness each day. Kathryn's book includes poignant, personal poems and notes from her journals. ALLERGIC TO LIFE is a story of hope!

~ Bette A. Stevens, Maine author/illustrator of PURE TRASH PURE TRASH: The Story: Shawn Daniels in a Poor Boy's Adventure: 1950s Rural New England, AMAZING MATILDA and THE TANGRAM ZOO and WORD PUZZLES TOO!

Joy Lo-Bamijoko says

I could not believe what I was reading with this book! I just could not believe that a human body could

undergo such trashing as the author's body underwent and live. As I read along, I was in apprehension all the time waiting to come to the point where the author gave up the ghost, but back in my mind I knew that if the author was telling this overwhelming story, she must still be alive. What a story of stoicism! ... An ox, that's what she is. This is the story of the power and strength of survival, of faith, of trust in the healing power of God, and above all, the power of love.

Rick is a living saint. At the end when he did not write his experience, I knew that was the right thing to do. He lived that whole experience with the author, therefore, the whole story is also his story. And the daughters,... God bless them for being so understanding and loving. What about those wonderful and patient doctors Spitzer and Rea, they know what being a doctor means, to care, and to care with love, understanding and patience.

The author may not be well in her body but she is well in her mind. The mind that stayed firm, strong, and unchanging. The mind that kept such good record of a devastating illness, so that the story will be told, and the world will learn. Kathryn, God kept you alive for this, that this story be told.

I was in awe of the experience the author underwent in this book, and I still am. This is a great story of survival, well written, and a great read.

Rave Reviews Book Club says

When I first began reading *Allergic to Life* by Kathryn Treat, I, for some strange reason felt as if I was about to be bombarded with a ton of medical jargon and my brain would instantly be thrown into information overload (something I always try to avoid). This is one of those times where you have to remind others NEVER TO JUDGE A BOOK BY IT'S COVER (and by the way, the cover of the book is what made me want to read it!).

Once inside and deep into the story, I found myself so engrossed in her journey, that I didn't want to stop reading. And that's what this book does, it PULLS you into this author's journey, one that I now feel, we all must go on. I am a mother of two daughters, just like this author, and to have an illness keep you away from the joys in their lives...to sit on the sidelines while your daughter plans her wedding, to not be able to be as involved as you would normally have been in the birth of your grandchildren ... I found my own heart breaking for Kathryn and her daughters.

This book teaches a lot about the many allergies that we can become afflicted with, things we've never even thought of in our every day lives, the foods we eat, the clothes we wearcan I be so bold to say ... even the air we breathe? What was so amazing about this author is that she began to document her journey. She would write things down (it was very clear that she was a true organizer) but who, being as sick as she was on some days, would have the clarity of mind to do something so brilliant? Well, Kathryn Treat did.

I don't like spoilers and so I'm not going to give you ANY, but what I am going to give you today, is some priceless advice. I am a book reviewer and critic of the worst kind and I have to say, that this book is one for the ages. You will do yourself a great dis-service if you don't pick it up, read it, learn from it and share it with the world.

I don't think we've heard the last of Kathryn's journey. I feel that she will one day stand in front of millions and share her story with the world. And even though she might still have to wear a mask over her face, that

alone will prove to you how strong even YOU can stand in the face of any obstacle. Kathryn Treat's life was turned into a pure hell by her allergies, beginning with mold, and although I felt extremely sad for her, her strength and her courage to win each and every battle, her endurance to keep going when all she felt like doing was hiding under her covers, is what kept me rushing through my work and my extremely busy life to get back to read more of her story. This book will do the same for you.

I think even in the best fiction books which are meant to entertain us, there is always a lesson we learn. Kathryn Treat taught me that no matter how bad, no matter how hard I might think my life is, there is always someone who has it a little bit worse, and if they're anything like Kathryn Treat, they're probably not even complaining about it.

I don't give 5***** star ratings easily but this was truly ONE EXCEPTIONAL READ!

Kenneth Kerr says

Inspirational!

'Allergic to Life' is the true story of the author's life threatening battles with medical problems that originated with her sensitivity to molds in the workplace when she worked as a secretary in her local school. The infections started in her sinuses, but eventually took over her entire body. Her descriptions of the pain and suffering she experienced from the allergic reactions is heart breaking. Over time she discovered that she was allergic to many foods, common fragrances, medicines, and many chemicals. She walks the reader through the labyrinth of doctors and medical facilities that examined, tested, and treated her, and she explains the numerous medical procedures and approaches used to try to control the problems as they evolved.

The author's recall, assisted by her journals and medical records, is nothing short of amazing. She tells the story of despair and depression caused by continuous pain and suffering brought about by her sensitivities and reactions to almost everything. She also describes her multi-year battle for workman's compensation, and the frustrations of dealing with the Social Security Administration.

She does a remarkable job of telling the story not only from a detailed medical perspective, but also including the emotional issues she dealt with during this decade long journey. She tells her story honestly and with courage, partially because she wants others to know about these environmentally triggered medical problems. She is a strong woman who miraculously found the courage to fight and fight and fight some more.

I strongly recommend this book to everyone. It has enormous educational value.

Micki Peluso says

Allergic to Life: My Battle for Survival, Courage, and Hope by Kathryn Chastain Treat

This is a story of a 44-year-old woman whose life is turned into a nightmare, as she reenters the workplace,

only to find that she has an extreme allergic reaction to the mold in the building. Author Kathryn Chastain Treat narrates her day by day excruciating experiences as multiple allergens turn her into a prisoner locked in her own little world. Her immune system is unable to fight the barrage of everyday allergens that continue to mount, attempting to destroy her life for an entire decade.

This is a book I could not put down, having suffered similar symptoms, but nowhere near the level of this brave woman, who needed to wear a mask on her face in public, and throw away her clothes, worn only once. At its worst, she had to live in a specially detoxified building, separate from her own home and her devoted husband.

I happened to meet Kathryn briefly online while reading and replying to a Rave Review Book Club interview. Months later she passed on to a place free from the nightmare in which she had lived. Reading her book, knowing she had made such progress overcoming her allergies, is often difficult. As a talented writer, Kathryn brings the reader into her life story and takes them along on her incredible, almost unbelievable story. She shares her tears, hopes, fears and strength, making this outstanding book a true testament to overcoming and defeating the ordinary things that were deadly toxic to her.

This book and its author had a profound and lasting impact upon my own life and is a recommended read for everyone on so many levels. Kathryn Treat may have had the most horrifying experiences throughout her battle but in spite of it, she lived and loved to the fullest until she reached the point where she was no longer, "Allergic to Life."

Micki Peluso, author of . . . And the Whippoorwill Sang

Lynne says

The author was a healthy, middle aged wife and mother with a vibrant, creative life which changed dramatically for the worse almost overnight. After getting a new job, she began to develop regular painful sinus and bone infections many of which required surgery, and this was further complicated by a growing intolerance to her medications, and frequent anaphylactic episodes. Eventually the cause was discovered to be high levels of toxic moulds in her work environment, but moving to a new school added further complications in that she was now reacting to other chemicals, such as new carpets and paint work.

This is her journey to find healing, a journey which takes many years and has the additional stresses of long drawn out battles over Workers Compensation and Social Security, not to mention the huge impact of her frequent absences and growing limitations on her family.

Eventually she begins to improve, but it comes at the cost of most of her personal possessions along with much of her freedom. At the same time, she discovers that "health and living life (limited as it is) are much more important than my things."

As a medical journal, the information is detailed and concise, although there were times when I wished it could have been condensed. It's not a great work of literature - periodic grammatical errors were rather irritating. However, her narrative style is warm and engaging and the greatest impact is the reminder to take mould and damp problems seriously.

E.M. Cooper says

‘Allergic to Life’ is a detailed documentary account of the late Kathryn Treat’s ordeal with multiple chemical sensitivities.

Kathryn went from being a healthy woman excited to be tackling her first job after raising two daughters to developing multiple life-threatening allergies. In her quest for wellness she sought help from various specialists and endured tests, treatments and debilitating surgeries. As well as detailing information about Kathryn’s allergies and treatments, the book provides resources, references and a useful glossary.

Although recently Kathryn sadly lost her battle, ‘Allergic to Life’ is a tribute to her courage, spirit and determination. It promotes understanding and awareness of the burden and suffering endured by those with serious multiple chemical allergies. This book is also a tribute to the love and support given by Kathryn’s family and in particular her husband, Rick and their daughters, Sarah and Laura, and also to caring people such as Kathryn’s doctors, specialists, friends and her school co-workers who looked after her on this harrowing journey.

Charles Ray says

Imagine waking up one day and learning that you’re becoming allergic to everything around you. Foods you formerly ate can now make you deathly ill, and your work environment is not just uncomfortable, but potentially fatal.

This is the situation that Kathryn Chastain Treat found herself in, and about which she has written in *Allergic to Life*. A journal of her battle with a debilitating condition that threatened to break her family apart, and caused her to have to physically separate herself from the things that she had grown up with, it is also a story of courage and persistence. Treat’s battles with an uncomprehending and often uncaring bureaucracy, dealings with doctors who didn’t understand her condition, and with her own frustrations and anxieties, are related almost matter-of-factly. She takes us almost day-by-day through her ordeal, in amazing detail. What really shines through in this book, though, is the power of human will; the ability to keep going when there is nothing left but the will to ‘go on.’

There are a lot of medical terms, but Treat provides a glossary at the end that explains them. A highly recommended read for those who feel that all hope is gone. Treat shows us well that, as long as there is hope there is life.

Alex Jones says

When I saw Kathryn Chastain Treat’s book, *Allergic to Life*, it was one book I knew I had to download immediately. The problem of environmental sensitivities and allergies is a growing problem that doesn’t get near the attention it deserves. It is one of those problems that, if you don’t have it yourself, is very difficult to understand why others seem to be so badly affected, and why they just can’t get over it. Sadly, when people can’t see or understand somebody else’s health problem, they don’t see the need to do anything about it.

I also suffer from allergies and sensitivities to a growing variety of fragrances and chemicals, and was recently diagnosed with adult-onset asthma. Yet, compared with Kathryn Chastain Treat's nightmare journey over the past fifteen years, my problems are minuscule and hardly worth mentioning. *Allergic to Life* is, in reality, Kathryn's journal of that fifteen-year nightmare that began with her unknowing exposure to mold in the school where she had just started to work. Her health problems began with a mold infection in her sinuses that became chronic and extremely resistant to anti-fungal and antibiotic medication, requiring a series of sinus surgeries to scrape out the offending mold. Even worse, the molds produced powerful toxins and carcinogens that attacked and poisoned her entire body, eventually leading to removal of all of her internal sex organs, which were full of high concentrations of toxins. Early stages of cancer were detected in the biopsies from some of those tissues!

The toll on Kathryn's life has been devastating, beginning with the weeks and months on end that she spent in a special treatment facility in Dallas, away from her family and social support. It was here that dedicated doctors were trying to identify the foods and environmental allergens that affected her, and were trying in vain to desensitize her to them.

Along the way, Kathryn managed to find a small core within the medical community that believed her, and became her allies in her fight against her body's allergic reactions. Eventually, her husband had to build her a separate "Safe House" - a structure built almost entirely of allergen-free materials. She has a limited number of safe foods she can eat, and safe clothing she can wear. But she pays a steep price for her safety, having to live a life of relative isolation, where her loved ones must either change into "safe" clothing when they enter her house, or must wear Tyvek hazmat apparel when they visit.

Allergic to Life is an arduous read because Kathryn has documented most of her horrific ordeal in her journal over the years. One could argue that the book might have been condensed to make it more readable. But I think that doing so would have devalued Kathryn's story and diluted the seriousness of the whole issue of environmental pollution and allergens.

Kathryn's book is both educational and inspirational. If you enjoy reading memoirs, biographies, or books about current social issues, and if you enjoy reading about people who manage to overcome insurmountable obstacles, this book is definitely for you. If, like me, you are interested in becoming part of the movement to raise public awareness about the use of toxic fragrances and chemicals - much like we have managed to raise public awareness and reduce the amount of tobacco smoke we breathe - then I highly recommend Kathryn Chastain Treat's *Allergic to Life* as your next non-fiction "Must Read".

Rating: ★★★★★
