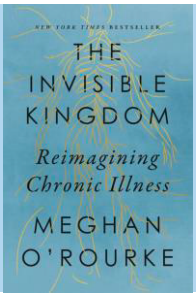
Discussion Guide



The Invisible Kingdom
Meghan O'Rourke

Riverhead Books
2022
336 pages
ISBN: 978-11594633799

Autoimmune Disorder

Summary

A silent epidemic of chronic illnesses afflicts tens of millions of Americans: these are diseases that are poorly understood, frequently marginalized, and can go undiagnosed and unrecognized altogether. Renowned writer Meghan O'Rourke delivers a revelatory investigation into this elusive category of "invisible" illness that encompasses autoimmune diseases, post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome, and now long COVID, synthesizing the personal and the universal to help all of us through this new frontier.

Questions

1. What societal issues do you think exacerbate autoimmune illnesses? Is there anything the medical community should or can be doing to address or alleviate these issues?
2. The author brings up issues surrounding the difficulty in getting diagnosed. Why do you think it is so difficult to get a diagnosis for many autoimmune diseases? Do these issues affect your own life and your healthcare?
3. Living with autoimmune disease takes a toll on psychological health. What can we do to make it possible for people living with autoimmune illness to get to a base of psychological well-being? What do you think about how the author addressed their own psychological well-being?
4. Why do you think doctors will sometimes dismiss patients and tell them it's all in their head orjust stress? What would it take to change this?
5. What thoughts do you have about the author's choice for the title? How is the word "invisible" demonstrated throughout the book?
6. In what ways do you think the book would have been different if the author was of a different gender or ethnicity?
7. Have you ever felt the need to look for answers or understanding outside of traditional avenues? What do you think about the author's use of nontraditional paths to healing?
8. Do you think the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way society views those who are chronically ill? Is society more comfortable or less comfortable with chronic illness now?
9. Do you think our current medical system can embrace a more holistic, personalized approach to medicine, particularly to those with autoimmune diseases? Why or why not?
10. Did reading this book change the way you view chronic illness? If so, how?

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