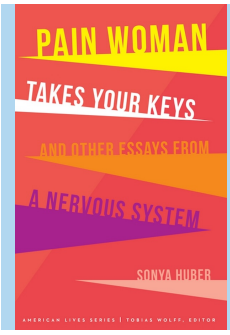
Discussion Guide



Pain Woman Takes Your Keys, and other Essays from a Nervous System
Sonya Huber

University of Nebraska Press
2017
204 pages
ISBN: 978-0803299917

Autoimmune Disorder

Summary

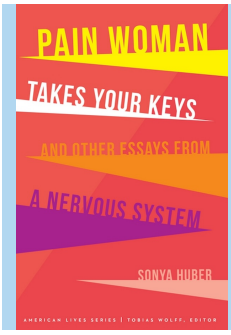
Pain Woman Takes Your Keys, and Other Essays from a Nervous System is a collection of literary and experimental essays about living with chronic pain. Sonya Huber moves away from a linear narrative to step through the doorway into pain itself, into that strange, unbounded reality. Huber addresses the nature and experience of invisible disability, including the challenges of gender bias in our health care system, the search for effective treatment options, and the difficulty of articulating chronic pain. She makes pain a lens of inquiry and lyricism, finds its humor and complexity, describes its irascible character, and explores its temperature, taste, and even its beauty.

Questions

1. Have you experienced chronic pain or autoimmune disease, or had a loved one who experienced these conditions? Which of the descriptions in the book rang true to your or your loved one's experience?
2. Have you or someone you know spent years trying to find a diagnosis for a condition?
3. What effects does that have on mental health and well-being, and on relationships with family and friends?
4. What have you seen as the benefits and challenges connected to the 1-10 pain scale?
5. At the end of "The Lava Lamp of Pain" and in the essay "Pain Woman Takes Your Keys," the author comes up with a voice or persona she calls "Pain Woman." Can you think of any moments from your own life in which difficulty, crisis, or challenge seemed to birth a new side to your personality, a new voice, or a new way of navigating in the world?
6. Did any of the essays in this collection shift your views about disability? In what way?
7. What were your reaction to the portrayal of the doctors described as Dr. A, Dr. B, and Dr.C in the essay "The Lava Lamp of Pain"? If you are a doctor, do you feel similar pressure to evaluate pain patients based on fears about substance abuse, and how does that change the nature of your conversations with those patients?
8. If you are a medical professional, what are the challenges you face in treating patients with complex autoimmune diseases? If you have an autoimmune disease, what are the challenges in living with such a condition?

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9. If you work in healthcare, do you think this book will change the way you interact with pain and autoimmune patients in any way? 4. Have you had difficulty, frustration, sadness, or other emotional reactions when dealing with patients whose conditions either do not respond to treatment or whose conditions don't seem to have a clear cause?
10. If you are a medical professional, do you think you might have been influenced by someone's gender presentation, ethnicity, or physical appearance in evaluating their medical condition?
11. How do short appointments in which patients are seen by doctors affect the patient-doctor relationship? Do you feel pressured to present a certain mask or disposition in these interactions? If you are a doctor, what opportunities do you have to connect with and reassure patients?

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