

Rita Goh - Author of “Back From The Brink Of Insanity” **Interview by Daniel Tay**

Dr Rita Goh recovered from schizophrenia and depression about a year ago. In her second book “Back From The Brink Of Insanity”, she chronicles her experiences with mental illness and her triumph over them.

Tell us what inspired you to write this book.

Books of this kind are generally written by psychiatrists who have not gone through the illness. I wrote this book containing what I went through and what I felt at that time. I want to bring hope to persons with mental illness and depression, and their families.

It will be good for those who are recovering or have recovered from mental illness and depression, and their caregivers. In fact, it is applicable to anyone wanting to learn more about mental illness and depression.

How does one recover from schizophrenia?

There must be strong support from family and friends. Medication is necessary. And counselling helps to untie knots in the head and heart. And of course, divine help.

Why do you write?

Other than bringing hope to others, writing is also partly therapy for myself. As I write, it is a letting go of my experiences.

It must be difficult to write openly on such a subject. Can you tell us some of the difficulties you encountered in being an author?

Indeed. First of all, one must not self-stigmatise. There are organisations out there who are trying to remove the stigma of mental illness. Real cases of schizophrenia are nothing like what you see in the media.

Secondly, writer’s block is one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome when writing a book. After the manuscript is completed, you need to find the right editor. By right, I mean those who can help convey your messages accurately. For example, my editor was Raymond Anthony Fernando, author of “Loving A Schizophrenic”.

And how about the rewards?

In the end, I have no regrets writing this book. It has been worth all the effort and time, especially when I hear my readers tell me that they were moved to tears after reading my story. Others simply hug me and thank me for sharing my story.

Writing may not always be commercially viable, but it’s like a mission from above to create a greater awareness of mental illness. This outweighs the commercialism.

Thanks Rita. What advice do you have for other writers?

Write from the heart. It is easier to write from your own personal experiences than it is to write fiction books. Always be sincere and never be afraid to be misunderstood.

“Back From The Brink Of Insanity” was first launched on Oct 8, 2005, during the World Mental Health Day, organised by the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH). It is priced at \$18.90 and can be purchased from Rita’s website at: www.ritagoh.com or ordered online through Rank Books at www.rankbooks.com.