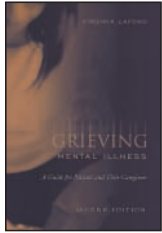


## Grieving mental illness: a guide for patients and their caregivers, 2nd ed.

Virginia Lafond



Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press; 2002. 123 pp. \$17.95 (paper) ISBN 0-8020-8532-6

**Rating:** \*\*½

**Audience:** Patients with mental illness and their caregivers

**Content:** The central tenets of this self-help manual are that people who are afflicted with mental illness suffer not only from the illness itself but also from the psychological effects of their diagnosis, and that coming to terms with those effects is a grief process. From this vantage point, Lafond, a social worker with the schizophrenia program at the Royal Ottawa Hospital, takes us through the familiar stages of denial, sadness, anger, fear and acceptance. In short chapters peppered with clinical anecdotes and wisdom won through clinical and personal experience with mental illness, she tries to help both patients and caregivers identify and work through their undoubtedly complex reactions.

**Strengths:** The chief value of this book lies in its theme. Grief is an undeveloped concept in our current approach to psychological illness. Because mental illness is both stigmatized and frightening, society — including patients, caregivers and professionals — often fail to validate the sense of loss that accompanies diagnosis. Lafond not only legitimizes grief, but also gives useful suggestions on how to identify and deal with the grieving process that she believes inevitably accompanies mental illness.

**Limitations:** This book suffers from the drawbacks of the self-help genre: in at-

tempting to be all things to all people, it is at times imprecise, contradictory and condescending. Given her theme, it is striking that the author defines neither grief nor mental illness. It is also striking that, although she urges her readers not to let others tell them what to feel, Lafond is quite prescriptive herself, even to the point of advising us when to take a break from reading (whether we want to or not) and encouraging us to pat ourselves on the back for finishing a particular section. In general, *Grieving Mental Illness* can be recommended to patients with a major mental illness or their caregivers. It will do no harm, and something of value will emerge for all readers, including health care professionals.

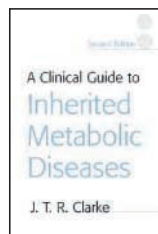
**L. Rex Kay**

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This book is available through your local book retailer or through the publisher at [www.utppublishing.com/](http://www.utppublishing.com/)

## A clinical guide to inherited metabolic diseases, 2nd ed.

JTR Clarke



Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2002. 188 pp. US\$40 (paper) ISBN 0-521-89076-4

**Rating:** \*\*\*\*

**Audience:** Pediatricians, clinical geneticists, residents and others involved in the care of patients with inherited metabolic disorders

**Content:** An excellent book for physicians who find inherited metabolic disorders intimidating, this book is also an excellent source for those who already care for patients with these disorders and would like to solidify their understanding of basic principles. In general, books written on this area of medicine are descriptions of metabolic condi-

tions, which implies that the patient already has a diagnosis. This book, however, teaches the reader how to proceed when an inherited metabolic disorder is suspected or needs to be ruled out. The information is presented in such a clear and simple fashion that few people would find this book difficult to read. In addition, each chapter and chapter subsection is brief enough to be read fairly quickly. I would suggest reading the introductory chapter and then reading the chapter or sections that are relevant to one's current practice or a particular case. For example, physicians who assess patients with developmental delay and want to determine which patients should undergo investigations to rule out a metabolic disorder should read the section on chronic encephalopathy in chapter 2.

**Strengths:** In this book, Clarke teaches a complex subject in a simple but complete manner. Biochemical pathways are often intimidating for clinicians, but Clarke has managed to provide figures that are easily understood and yet provide all the necessary information. His tables and algorithms are excellent references to use for differential diagnosis in clinical situations. The author has also organized his material nicely into relevant chapters and subsections that address the clinical problems faced by physicians in day-to-day practice.

**Limitations:** This book is intended to complement other textbooks that provide more in-depth descriptions of inherited metabolic disorders.

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This book is available through your local book retailer or through the publisher at [books.cambridge.org/0521890764.htm](http://books.cambridge.org/0521890764.htm)

Items reviewed are rated on a 4-star scale (4 = excellent)