



Sometimes Amazing Things Happen: Heartbreak and Hope on the Bellevue Hospital Psychiatric Prison Ward

Elizabeth Ford MD

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From the Chief of Psychiatry for Correctional Health Services in New York City comes a revelatory and deeply compassionate memoir that takes readers inside Bellevue Hospital's forensic psychiatry unit and brings to life the world—the system, the staff, and the haunting cases—that shaped one young psychiatrist as she learned about respect, survival and our shared humanity.

Elizabeth Ford went through medical school unsure of where she belonged. It wasn't until she did her psychiatry rotation that she found her calling—to care for one of the most vulnerable populations of mentally ill people, the inmates of New York City's jails, including Rikers Island, who are so sick that they are sent to the Bellevue Hospital Prison Ward for care.

These men were broken, without resources or support, and very ill. They could be violent, unpredictable, but they could also be funny and tender and needy. Mostly, they were human and they awakened in Ford a boundless empathy. Her patients made her a great doctor and a better person.

While Ford was a psychiatrist at Bellevue she became a wife and a mother. In her book she shares her struggles to balance her personal and professional lives, to care for her children and her patients, and to maintain the empathy that is essential to her practice—all in the face of a complex institution, an exhausting workload, and the deeply emotionally taxing nature of her work.

Ford brings humor, grace, and humanity to the lives of the patients in her care and in beautifully rendered prose illuminates the inner workings (and failings) of our mental health and criminal justice systems.

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