



All Blacks Don't Cry

John Kirwan

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John Kirwan was one of the most devastating wingers New Zealand, and world, rugby had ever seen. A prominent and revered figure at the dawn of the professional age of rugby, he seemed to live a charmed life. Nobody knew, though, that behind closed doors 'JK' was living a life of tormented fear. Afflicted with depression for many years - including those as a high-profile sportsman - Kirwan was able to survive by reaching out, seeking help from those closest to him. All Blacks Don't Cry is John Kirwan's story of hope, of working through the pain and living a full life - a poignant, inspirational and helpful example for anybody battling depression. 'I've been to hell and I'm back. If you're in that same place, then I understand what you're going through.'

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All Blacks Don't Cry Details

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From Reader Review All Blacks Don't Cry for online ebook

Allyson says

Well worth a read. This personal account of depression is written in John Kirwan's simple, sincere style and describes his personal battle with and life after the battle. He believes that the tough rugby culture and drive required to be a top sportsman prevented him from seeking help earlier and provides information about how to detect and live with depression. Inspiring. Although I found his very simplified style irritating initially (there's something "honest Kiwi bloke gets in touch with his softer side" about it), his desire to share his experience and get his message across simply took over and I soon focused on the message.

Tony Nielsen says

Ex famous All Black rugby player & now International rugby coach John Kirwan has fronted a series of campaigns in New Zealand raising awareness of depression, especially among males. This book summarises his journey from depression to wellness in a frank and meaningful way. Excellent and inspirational read from a high profile sportsman who decided to use his successful battle to highlight a pathway for others.

Kate says

This is an excellent book - not in the sit down and escape kind of way but in the I can do something for myself or loved one.

Here in New Zealand this guy is a famous sports hero and to publish such a book is outstanding. It is very revealing but incredibly useful for somebody who is dealing with depression either themselves or as a support person. The language is appropriate but the type set big with nice pictures so a non reader will not be put off.

As a health professional there was nothing new or surprising for me however he demystifies the realities of mental health beautifully and deals with much of the stereotypical perceptions well. So much so I have recommended it to several patients within a day of completing it!

A well constructed thought provoking self help book - I hope he is the next coach of the All Blacks it would do much to empower the best in men.

Thomas Edmund says

My initial thoughts of Kirwan's Depression campaign were favourable although I must confess an aspect of me took it for granted that such a project was a symptom of famous people syndrome where popular well known folks get shoulder-tapped to engage in such 'good-works' only to increase their popularity and so forth.

This couldn't be further from the truth. Kirwan did the project out of good-will and genuine desire to help. It was also a struggle to decide to engage in the project, even as world-renowned sportsperson Kirwan's family were concerned about the negative perception of others.

So anyway, the actual book was a surprise for me. Far from an autobiographical or self-help seminar the book really just contains a a straight-forward and down to earth description of what Kirwan went through and a few pieces of advice especially for other 'manly' men. The book doesn't try to cover everything re: depression nor does it dramatize or over-celebrate Kirwan's life and career. It really is a simple, succinct, summary of Kirwan's experience with depression and panic attacks, what helped, what didn't help and few pointers of advice.

In short an excellent read for anyone.

Merryn says

I highly recommend this for anyone who has suffered from depression or who is supporting someone who has depression. It is an honest and frank look at symptoms, causes and how to help. I really admire JK for putting his hand up and admitting that he suffers from a mental illness - he has removed a lot of the stigma surrounding it in NZ, especially for men.

Alsie says

This book does an amazing job of fighting the stereotypes of depression and mental illness. In All Blacks Don't Cry, John Kirwan remembers the the walk he went through battling severe depression and also gives tips of getting through. He proves you don't have to be a soft person, as many think, to suffer from depression. It was great he addressed the stereotype of Kiwi guys needing to be 'tough and invincible', as it simply isn't possible for people to never have times they find hard.

A great memoir, I think this would a book of great support to people suffering.

Annawebby says

For people outside of New Zealand, I can't emphasise enough how big a deal it was for John Kirwan to write this and discuss mental health issues in the open. If it can happen to the most successful individuals in the ultimate "man up" silent and strong community that is rugby, it can happen anywhere. I think it has helped innumerable people to gain awareness of mental health in themselves and their loved ones and also to give them hope.

Jo says

I find it massively patronising that he says "I understand what you are going through" Really? In his book he writes (as does his doctor) that he wasn't suicidal. How can somebody who hasn't experienced this side of depression understand what a suicidally depressed person is going through?

He wasn't psychotic, he wasn't admitted to an inpatient unit and given safety sheets for the mattress on the floor, held down and given an injection of antipsychotic after taking an overdose. So I find glib phrases such as "hold on to hope" and "I know what you are going through" pretty lame to be honest.

Ben says

As someone just going through early stages of anxiety and depression, this book gave me real hope and helped me understand what I was going through. It's very hard to explain to someone when you cannot understand the problem yourself, but reading this in the language and style it's written has helped me immensely. Should be more readily available in the UK.

Adrian says

New Zealand males are pretty basic types, you might even call them emotionally retarded. What John Kirwan has done with this book is step outside that claustrophobic insular world of macho Kiwi maleness - wherein it's pretty much a sin to hire a builder rather than build your house yourself - and single-handedly attempt to usher in an era during which it's acceptable to talk about subjects other than house prices and deck sizes, and to feel emotions that don't fit into the box of frontiersman stoicism. For taking that risk and making it pay off to the extent that he has been rewarded with a knighthood for services to mental health, he deserves to win the Super Rugby title with his new team the Blues!

Reba says

I felt like it was important to read this book as a Briwi* counselling student because of John Kirwan's place in New Zealand culture - both as one of the first rugby superstars and for his incredible work facing the depression awareness campaign. I didn't expect this book to be great, or even good (my bullshit assumptions about what professional rugby players are like are showing here), but I absolutely loved it.

Blokey men are at particular risk when it comes to depression, as they are often massively affected by patriarchal rules about 'manliness' and not showing emotional vulnerability. John Kirwan, aka JK, has done a great service to the world in writing a book on his personal journey through depression for such a audience. His warmth, humility, thoughtfulness, and huge heart shine through, along with stigma-busting and many practical suggestions for dealing with depression. He also touches on his thoughts around the sociological influences on people developing depression.

I may have fallen a leetle bit in love with this guy, and am really looking forward to reading his later book on parenting/supporting teens dealing with mental health issues next.

*Briwi = British-originating Kiwi resident

palomino says

I was IN AWE when a Legendary All Black Rugby Player John Kirwan, came forward and spoke of major anxiety issues and depression at the height of his career some years ago ... issues he delicately called 'freaking out'. I enjoyed this book, specifically for men dealing with anxiety and/or depression. Rugby in New Zealand IS New Zealand and unfortunately that makes these mere rugby players 'gods'. To have such a talented player and man stand up publicly and tell his story when no-one else would even utter the embarrassing words "Mental Illness" has helped changed SO MANY lives since his story was told.

Graveydice says

What JK has done for mental health - especially men's mental health in New Zealand - is nothing short of ... well ... words kinda fail me. Heroic, life-saving, life-changing, he is just brilliant.

Lise Cartwright says

If you know someone who is suffering from depression and just don't understand, this book will help - you can't expect to understand something you've never experienced, but you can understand and empathise once you 'get' that this isn't about you, it's about them.

Jane says

This book is amazing, and John Kirwan deserves a medal for writing it! It is so much more costly to come out with the fact that you've had depression when you're a famous person. But John does more, he is part of a whole awareness campaign in his home country of New Zealand.

If you suffer from depression, or have a loved one who does, this book is a must. It is SO clear, non-judgmental, and not at ALL the "you must do this, you must do that" kind of book. John just shares his story with honesty and clarity. And it sounds just like a sportsperson wrote it! It's pithy, going straight to the point. It is indeed, as the subtitle says, a story of hope.

If you found this helpful, you might want to read, Thank GOD for antidepressants! by Jane Newman, which deals with the struggles of having to take long-term medication and the fall-out on one's relationships.
