

Normalize It: Upending the Silence, Stigma, and Shame that Shape Women's Lives

Jessica Zucker

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Jessica Zucker's self-help book *Normalize It* demonstrates that storytelling is the way to break the cycles of silence, stigma, and shame that keep women from disclosing difficult episodes in their lives.

Zucker shares composite case studies of clients from her psychology practice, which focuses on reproductive and maternal mental health, to illustrate wider issues including grief, shame, pregnancy loss, sexual trauma, the complex feelings surrounding motherhood, and the pressure to be perfect. "Examining our stories is often the first step in accessing more freedom, authenticity and connection," she writes, allowing people to "begin the process" of understanding and integrating their life experiences. It also helps to break taboos that keep women from sharing their stories and lets others know they aren't alone.

Herein, women's stories are combined with statistics and research to show how common these issues are. The book encourages working with a therapist to discover how, when, and to whom one's personal episodes should be told. Because everyone's experiences are different, it says, the best courses of action will vary. Still, plenty of options are named for those who have a story that needs sharing: revealing a truth on social media, disclosing to a family member, contributing to an online support group, or writing about the event are all recommended.

Most of the book's stories are positive, focusing more on the beneficial effects of disclosing traumatic episodes than on the potential backlash. By exploring the normalcy of events that are often kept quiet, Zucker encourages acknowledgement of hidden truths and the consideration of how truths might be brought into the world.

Normalize It is a vital, supportive self-help book that encourages having illuminating discussions about one's difficult life experiences.

SARAH WHITE (March / April 2025)

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