

But You Look so Normal

Lost and Found in a Hearing World

by Claudia Marseille



Non-Fiction - Memoir

280 Pages

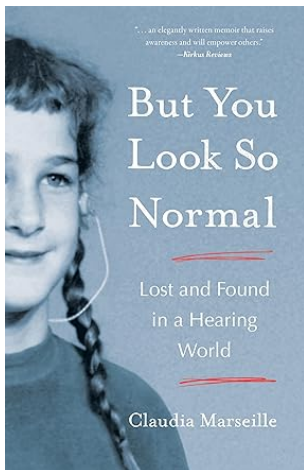
Reviewed on 08/17/2023

Book Review

Reviewed by Nino Lobladze for Readers' Favorite

When Claudia was four years old, it became clear that she had severe hearing loss. Claudia's condition was caused by the side effect of a medication her mother had taken for nausea during her pregnancy. There weren't many options for people with hearing loss in the mid-1950s. Claudia attended a regular public school in Berkeley, California. Using hearing aids, Claudia learned lipreading to communicate with others. In her school, Claudia faced many challenges. As an outgoing child, she often felt lonely. She couldn't participate in group dialogues, staying outside the group of her schoolmates. Claudia's parents didn't fully understand her struggles. Her mother, a Holocaust survivor, used to tell Claudia to fix her problems herself. Claudia's father, often preoccupied with odd projects to gain money, paid little attention to Claudia and her brother, Elliot. Step by step, Claudia learned how to navigate and flourish in the world of sound. *But You Look So Normal* by Claudia Marseille is an inspirational and educational read for fans of memoirs and nonfiction.

In *But You Look So Normal*, Claudia Marseille narrates her incredible story from a historical perspective. Claudia gives us a glimpse into the development of hearing aids, starting from the 1950s to the digital era with its many innovations. The author shares her parents' tragic life stories before and during WWII, which read like a thriller. I appreciated Claudia's account of her trip to Israel and her time on the kibbutz. Claudia profoundly understood the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *But You Look So Normal* reveals how many difficulties a person with hearing loss faces daily. In childhood, Claudia often couldn't understand TV programs, movies, or even the words of popular songs, which made her an outcast among her peers. It may sound shocking today, but it took Claudia years to finally start telling them or her teachers about her difficulties with hearing. The author's courage at an age when women weren't supposed to stand up for themselves impresses a contemporary reader. Claudia graciously and with a dose of good humor accepted her limitations, like when her little daughter asked her a tricky question. This uplifting book will motivate and empower readers with hearing loss.



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Author Biography



At age four, I was diagnosed with a severe hearing loss. With determination and the help of powerful hearing aids, I learned to hear, speak and lipread. I was mainstreamed in public schools in Berkeley, CA. After earning master's degrees in archaeology and in public policy, and finally an MFA, I developed a career in photography and painting, a profession compatible with a hearing loss. I ran a fine art portrait photography studio for fifteen years before becoming a full-time painter. My paintings are represented by the Seager Gray gallery in Mill Valley, CA. and can be seen on my website: www.claudiamarseille.com

Recently, as my friends began experiencing age-related hearing challenges, I've heard them say, "Ah, now I understand what you went through." My heart goes out to anyone adapting to hearing loss; I genuinely empathize with the journey. However, there's a vast difference between living with severe-to-profound hearing loss from birth and experiencing mild hearing loss later in life. I hope my memoir offers a window into that unique experience.

I played classical piano much of my life; in my free time I love to read, watch movies, travel, spend time with friends, and attend concerts and art exhibits. I live with my husband in Oakland and we have one daughter