

READING GROUP GUIDE

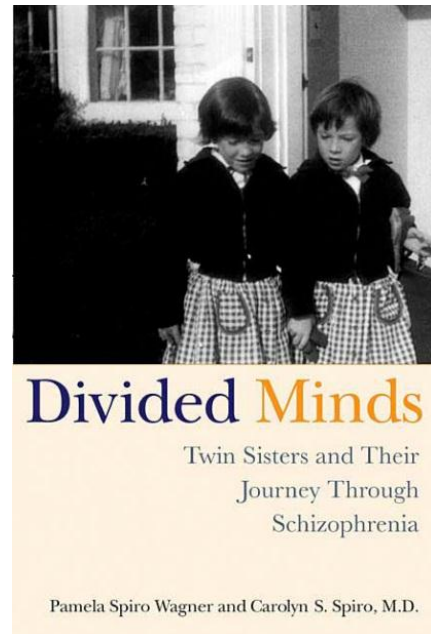
Divided Minds

Two Sisters and Their Journey Through Schizophrenia

*By Pamela Spiro Wagner and Carolyn S. Spiro,
M.D.*

ISBN 13: 78-0-312-32065-2

ISBN 10: 0-312-32065-5



About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Divided Minds* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Divided Minds*.

About the Book

Growing up in the fifties, Carolyn Spiro was always in the shadow of her more intellectually dominant and social outgoing twin, Pamela. But as the twins approached adolescence, Pamela began to succumb to schizophrenia, hearing disembodied voices and eventually suffering many breakdowns and hospitalizations.

Divided Minds is a dual memoir of identical twins, one of whom faces a life sentence of schizophrenia, and the other who becomes a psychiatrist, after entering the spotlight that had for so long been focused on her sister. Told in the alternating voices of the sisters, *Divided Minds* is a heartbreaking account of the far reaches of madness, as well as the depths of ambivalence and love between twins. It is a true and unusually frank story of identical twins with very different identities and wildly different experiences of the world around them.



READING GROUP GUIDE

About the Author

PAMELA SPIRO WAGNER is a writer and poet living in Wethersfield, Connecticut.

CAROLYN S. SPIRO, M.D., is a private practice psychiatrist living in Wilton, Connecticut.

Discussion Questions

1. Before reading this book what did you think schizophrenia was? What do you think it is now?
2. The “crowns incident” was significant for both twins. How did this theme play out in the rest of the book? Talk about how childhood events, seemingly meaningless, can form and change you for the rest of your life.
3. It seems that Pam first experienced symptoms in 1963 when JFK was killed. If she had told her parents, teachers or Linnie, how do you think they would have handled it at that time?
4. Carolyn reacted very differently, both to JFK’s death and to adolescence in general. Do you think her response was “normal”?
5. How would you interpret the twins’ experience of Gray Crinkled Paper? Is it only another one of Pam’s delusions, or could it have a greater spiritual or metaphorical significance?
6. Treatment of schizophrenia has changed a great deal since the 60s although there is still a terrible stigma attached to having this illness. What do you think should be done to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness?
7. This book was written in part to help others understand the experience of schizophrenia both from the viewpoint of the sufferer and the sibling. Has it succeeded? Why?
8. Carolyn becomes a psychiatrist while Pam gets sicker. Why doesn’t she treat Pam herself? Do you think family members should treat their own siblings or children? Why or why not?
9. What role does writing play in Pam’s life? Do you think it is true that madness and creativity go hand in hand?
10. From your own experience, what do you think of the current state of mental health care? Is it adequate? What changes would you make?

For more reading group suggestions, visit

www.readinggroupgold.com

