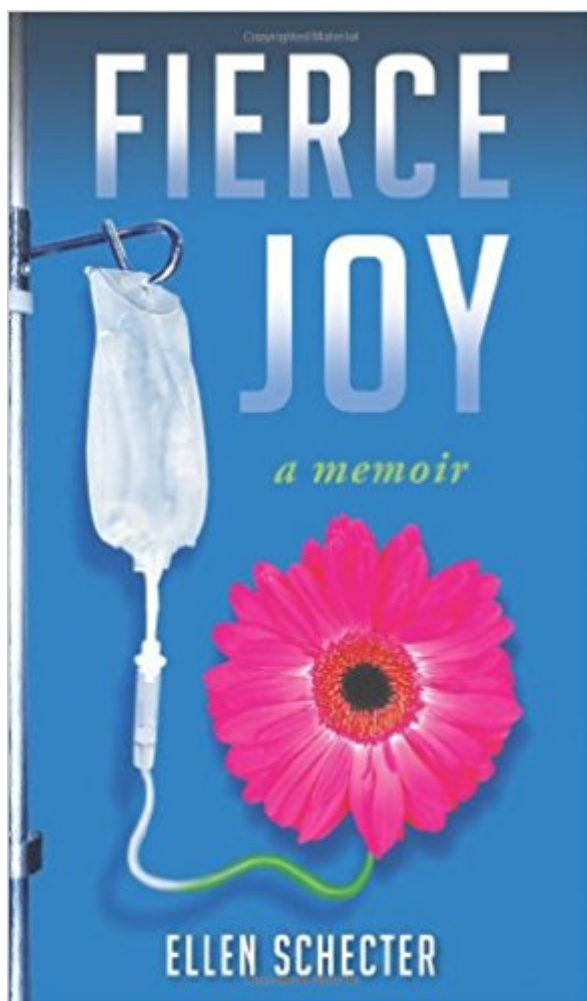




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# Fierce Joy



## Synopsis

*Fierce Joy: A Memoir* is a medical mystery, a spiritual adventure, and a love story. Ellen Schecter had everything she ever wanted: a loving marriage, two great kids, and her dream career writing children's books and television programs. Then her life shattered when she was diagnosed with a painful, potentially fatal disease. *Fierce Joy* tells the story of how Schecter found a way to be sick without suffering and transformed the loss of her place in the world of work into a quest for her soul. Propelled by illness into a search for new meanings, she learned to listen to her body and find healing even though a cure was impossible. Never asking "Why me?" she instead asked, "What's next?" and forged a new life paradoxically filled with joy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Ellen Schecter creates a visual symphony with her extraordinary command of the unique language of the soul...'Fierce Joy' is a powerful story full of hope, redemption, and the ultimate triumph of the human spirit." -The New York Journal of Books  
"Fierce Joy is one of the best memoirs of the year so far," Linda Wolf, [faboverfifty.com/bookblog/2012/04](http://faboverfifty.com/bookblog/2012/04)  
"[Ellen] Schecter says, 'I not only want to make peace with my illness, I want to sanctify it...to discover or create..a deeper, even sacred meaning for it.'"  
"Schecter shows there is solace to be found in that inevitable time when we each must look squarely into the face of our own mortality." [tabletmag.com/diagnosis-is-not-death](http://tabletmag.com/diagnosis-is-not-death)

I didn't just write FIERCE JOY: I lived it, day by day, minute by minute. This book began as notes

scribbled in a \$1 black-and-white speckled Composition Book--the kind we all used in elementary school. I bought one the day I first went to my first neurologist, and began filling it with questions more than answers. It was as if that were the first day of a new course I was taking: a lesson in what my new life would be like living with two terrible illnesses. Facts and questions soon shared space with ideas and feelings--and tears also left their marks. One notebook soon filled and I needed a second, then a third. I was exploring a whole new world, and needed to understand it. And, as a writer, I did that word by word. Then, the day I had to sign my final Disability papers and leave my job--a day when I felt my heart was cracking into jagged pieces--I began to realize that my notebooks were filled with the gold I could mine for the book I suddenly realized I was going to start writing--the book I suddenly announced I would write to a room full of strangers, the words jumping out of my mouth before I knew what I was saying. There are now more than five notebooks, all crammed with scraps, receipts, stick drawings, doctors' appointment cards, prescriptions, get-well cards, and notes of all kinds...and the best of those glints of gold became part of the book you are about to read. Writing this book helped me understand how to go on living: how to change my life and reach for joy. Not a pale or saccharine joy, but the robust, hard-won fierce joy that flames up out of harsh moments: the joy that is the honey in the rock. I hope you find your own joy: fierce, or gentle.

"Fierce Joy" is a beautifully written memoir about the author's pain, suffering, and coping with two very serious, incurable, debilitating diseases: lupus and severe peripheral neuropathy. Schechter writes vividly and poignantly about her experiences with and anger at having such awful physically incapacitating diseases. She describes in detail the pain and humiliation these diseases have caused her, and her efforts to cope. But rather than being a didactic, dry, depressing medical memoir, "Fierce Joy" is a joy to read. Schechter also writes about the happiness and comfort she experienced because of the help of many physicians, therapists, family members, friends, flowers, music, and religion. She details her medical and emotional ordeals with a remarkable sense of humor and lack of self pity. "Fierce Joy" will inspire people not only suffering from lupus and peripheral neuropathy, but other painful, disabling chronic conditions. It should also be read by their physicians, caregivers, family members, and friends.

This is an excellent Memoir told by a strong, brave woman who has a progressive illness. I once worked with Ellen and saw first hand how she suffered in pain and with the loss of her physical independence from this illness. This is story of one woman's fight for the life she worked hard to

build, in addition to telling a beautiful love story between Ellen and her husband and the wonderful life they worked hard together to give their children. I always admired Ellen, and while I haven't seen her now in almost 20 years, reading this book brought back so many memories of her strength, talent, and ability to be a great woman and friend in spite of all she lived with. Denise Coleman

Ellen's excellently written book made me think of the Joseph Campbell's description of the Hero's/ Heroine's journeys that take them beyond seemingly insurmountable problems to a place where they can find their 'bliss'. It brings this journey to the modern world in a way that we can identify with. The debilitating diseases she suffers, and her search for physical healing are told about with honesty and humor. Rather than give in to her physical limitations, she decides to live life to the fullest possible extent. Her 'spiritual' journey, opening new doors, is even more compelling. A journey that we can understand and follow. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to find inspiration.

I found *Fierce Joy* to be an incredibly moving story of the author's journey through debilitating illnesses only to come out stronger and more gifted at the conclusion than I could have imagined. It made me laugh and cry, sometimes within the same paragraph. And, while Ellen is learning to deal with pain, complicated medical and emotional issues, we grow with her. There are moving stories about her incredible doctors, her husband's and children's support, and a support group that learns how to help each other. I recommend *Fierce Joy* to everyone -- whether in good health or not.

I read this book first because I went to high school with Ellen, and we were in the same sorority there, so, of course, I was intrigued. We hadn't been in touch, but another friend suggested it to me who is still in contact with her. It is so well written and extremely touching. She has faced incredible challenges that others would have found totally destructive with grace, courage, and determination. I recommend this to anyone facing difficulty, anyone wanting to read a positive story about facing life's uphill battles, and anyone who wants to read a story about success under difficult circumstances. Ellen, I was so inspired.

This remarkable book will move and inspire, and it merits a wide audience, especially among those who provide care and services to someone with severe pain and terrible medical problems. I am in awe of all that the author endured and overcame. Her amazing talent of describing her experiences brings them to vivid life. Don't expect a chronology of her illnesses; instead she focuses on some

high and low points and her past, her spiritual connections and her discovery of Fierce Joy. I felt as if I were on her team throughout this journey and laughed out loud and pumped my fist and shed tears of joy.

Beautifully written, honest account of a illness and the author's ability to cope and live a good life. Inspiring. I especially loved it was set in NY and my neighborhood.

I was bored with this book...I have CIDP, and had expected it to be more about this Disease. I got about 1/2 way through this book, and actually put it down...and that was it! I NEVER do that! I leafed thru the rest and found nothing that even interested me...sorry!

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