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# How It Feels To Fly



## Synopsis

A struggle with body dysmorphia forces one girl to decide if letting go of her insecurity also means turning her back on her dreams. Sam has always known she could be a professional dancer but that was before her body betrayed her, developing unmanageable curves in all the wrong places. Lately, the girl staring back at Sam in the mirror is unrecognizable. Dieting doesn't work, ignoring the whispers is pointless, and her overbearing mother just makes it worse. Following a series of crippling anxiety attacks, Sam is sent to a treatment camp for teens struggling with mental and emotional obstacles. Forced to open up to complete strangers, Sam must get through the program if she wants to attend a crucial ballet intensive later in the summer. It seems hopeless until she starts confiding in a camp counselor who sparks a confidence she was sure she could never feel again. But when she's faced with disappointing setbacks, will Sam succumb to the insecurity that imprisons her? This compelling story from Kathryn Holmes examines one girl's efforts to overcome her worst enemy: herself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*Originally reviews on Goodreads and my blog\* Samantha gets sent to a camp called, Perform at Your Peak. This is a camp for any type artist or athletes that are having problems with anxiety. All Sam wants to be is a ballerina, but when she starts getting snickered at and being told by her teachers and mom she needs to lose weight, it brings on the panic attacks. I felt really bad for all of the teens in this camp because the stress put on them by their parents are worse than what I call bullies.

1. Sam - the ballerina
2. Katie - the gymnast
3. Zoe - the tennis player
4. Jenna - the ice skater
5. Omar - the theater kid
6. Dominic - the football player

All of these kids are going through their own kind of hell. And at first it seems like they are a group that will never be able to communicate with each other, let alone be friends. But, with the help of Dr. Lancaster, the college students, Andrew and Yasmin, they just might find what they are looking for. . . maybe just a little bit.

I very much enjoyed these characters. At first I didn't like Zoe, but once you find out her issues and get to know her, you realize you can't just judge a book by it's cover. I grew to love her character as time went on. Sam is the main character on the book, focusing on her body image and panic attacks. But the other characters are very present in the book and we learn about each child's issues. I loved all of the girls most of all because they slowly formed bonds. I still loved Dominique and Omar as well but the girls were closer together. There are moments of Sam crushing on Andrew the counselor but that doesn't lead to anything as it's not supposed to. Just some embarrassing moments for Sam. Because I have these same disorders plus a few others, I always enjoy reading a book that have these types of things in them. I like to see different views and if they get it right. Things change for each of the characters in the books. Maybe not the way they saw them change but they do change and they are all for the better. I also loved how they all remained in touch with each other after the camp. I would love that with some peeps like me and my issues.

EXCERPT

"Zoe, Jenna, Katie, Dominic and Omar, and I have had an ongoing email chain since everyone got home from Perform at Your Peak. Somewhere in the middle of the thread, we came up with our Crazy Camp nicknames. Zoe named herself Thelma after our Thelma and Louise-style road trip. I'm Barbs, since I'm coming to grips with maybe not being a ballerina after all. Jenna is Kwan, since she got Zoe to admit that striving to be like one of the greatest female figure skaters of all time wasn't really a bad thing. Katie is Bear, after Mr. Bear, her good-luck charm--and because it's funny to give the toughest name to the tiniest, bubbliest person. Omar is Bruno, thanks to that Bruno Mars hat he bought at the general store, and Dominic is Chunks, not only because he once threw up on the fifty-yard line but also because he's the opposite of chunky."

END EXCERPT

Sam wasn't at the last bit of camp and didn't get to set

her balloon free with the other kids so she did it herself and took a picture of it. I think I want to set off a whole set of balloons with my sayings on them. EXCERPT ~~~~~ Next to the collage, there's a photo of a tiny red balloon, barely a pinprick in the vast blue sky. Since I missed the last day at Perform at Your Peak, I had to release it on my own. I tied a piece of paper with the words "Take the leap" to its tail and let go. Feeling the string slip past my fingertips was like exhaling for the first time. END EXCERPT ~~~~~ Just beautiful!

This book felt really special to me. On one hand, there is this expectation that a dance book or, say, a cheerleading/gymnastics/figure skating book will deal with body issues on some level, yet the way that Holmes tackled this issue was both unexpected and fresh. Her MC, Samantha, was completely relatable as was her running inner dialogue, challenging her need to be happy with her new found self with negative, destructive self-talk. The setting of a summer camp for talented teens dealing with various issues was novel and interesting to me, as was Sam's journey from disbelief that she even had a problem, to acceptance of who she has become, versus who she would like to be. *How It Feels to Fly* is a must read for any teen girl, no matter her talent, skill, or passion.

Loved it! *How It Feels to Fly* hits all the emotions as the main character Sam struggles with her body image issues as a dancer at a summer camp for competitive teens. The author does a great job weaving the very real feelings of what it's like to be a teenager struggling with how she looks in the competitive world of dancing. Sam learns so much about herself and her new friends who each have struggles of their own. A great summer read!

GRADE: D-TWO WORDS: INACCURATE TREATMENT I'm a psychologist and when I read inaccurate portrayals of mental illness and/or treatment, I feel frustrated. I came so close to giving *HOW IT FEELS TO FLY* one star, but there were some redeeming factors. POSITIVES: -fairly accurate portrayal of anxiety-some realistic consequences-pleasant writing-interesting characters NEGATIVES: -creepy/flirty camp "counselor"-no such program would exist in that format (a psychologist bunking with 6 clients and 2 camp graduates think they're junior therapists where patients run amok a la the movie *Girl Interrupted*)-Insta-dramatic-breakthrough (queue the background music)-breaking into doctors offices-car stealing-corny ending Kathryn Holmes means well. She wanted to tell a story about recovery from anxiety and very real body image issues that plague so many teenagers. Like many girls, Samantha hates her changing body, especially since

she no longer looks like the long, lean ballerina she did before adolescence. She flirts with eating disorder behaviors and has many of the thoughts, her body image appears to be distorted, but not enough for a Body Dysmorphic Disorder diagnosis. A lot of teens suffer from sub clinical issues. In Sam's case, they cause non-traditional anxiety attacks. I like that Holmes focused on this population. Some of the activities she used might be used in a therapy program. I have no idea why Holmes chose to go with Andy, the inappropriate program-graduate-who-thought-he-was-a-therapist or to (badly) throw around the concept of transference. I know writers often think they need romance in every YA book, but love doesn't cure mental illness, it often makes recovery more complicated. If Holmes needed love, she could have used one of the other campers more easily. THEMES: anxiety, mental health, recovery, ballet, friendship Teens with body image issues might enjoy HOW IT FEELS TO FLY and there's nothing harmful that should worry parents or therapists.

Very thoughtful, well written with believable characters and situations.

I enjoyed the book thoroughly. Great read.

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