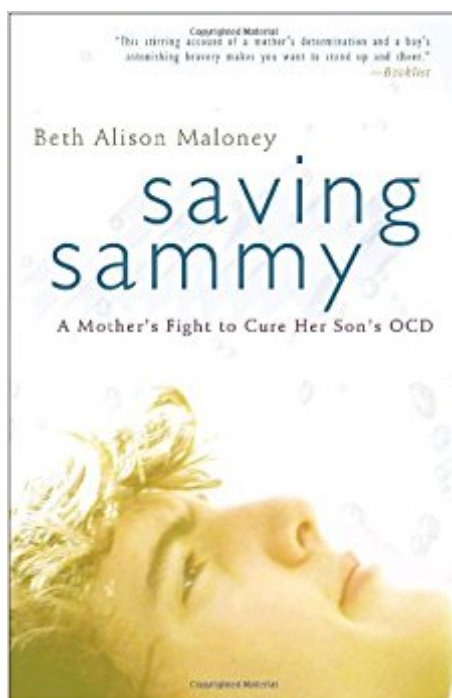


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# Saving Sammy: A Mother's Fight To Cure Her Son's OCD



## Synopsis

The story of one mother's fight against the medical establishment to prove the link between infection-triggered PANDAS and her son's sudden-onset OCD and Tourette syndrome. The summer before entering sixth grade, Sammy, a bright and charming boy who lived on the coast of Maine, suddenly began to exhibit disturbing behavior. He walked and ate with his eyes shut, refused to bathe, burst into fits of rage, slithered against walls, and used his limbs instead of his hands to touch light switches, doorknobs, and faucets. As Sammy's mother, Beth, already coping with the overwhelming responsibility of raising three sons alone, watched helplessly as her middle child descended into madness. Sammy was soon diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and later with Tourette syndrome. Unwilling to accept the doctors' prognoses for lifelong mental illness and repeated hospitalizations, Beth fought to uncover what was causing this decline. Beth's quest took her to the center of the medical community's raging debate about whether OCD and Tourette syndrome can be caused by PANDAS (Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections). With the battle lines firmly drawn, Beth searched until she found two cutting-edge doctors who answered that question with a definitive yes. Together, they cured Sammy. Five years later, he remains symptom free.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Maloney's debut chronicles her son, Sammy, and the illness that, almost overnight,

transformed him from a sunny, bright boy (described by one teacher as "the purest math mind the school had ever seen") into an antisocial stranger "so dominated by obsessions, compulsions, and rules that daily life becomes impossible." Sammy's descent into mental illness was diagnosed as severe Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Tourette's and a number of other ailments, all promising a lifetime of disability; it wasn't until a family acquaintance, whose son exhibited the same symptoms for 10 years, urged Maloney to have Sammy tested for Strep that they learned his condition was treatable. Describing herself as "part courtroom lawyer and part detective," attorney Maloney perseveres with ferocity and sharp storytelling instincts, making this medical mystery-meant to inform families dealing with mental illness-a tear-wrenching crowd-pleaser. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From *Publishers Weekly* (Starred) Maloney's debut chronicles her son, Sammy, and the illness that, almost overnight, transformed him from a sunny, bright boy (described by one teacher as "the purest math mind the school had ever seen") into an antisocial stranger "so dominated by obsessions, compulsions, and rules that daily life becomes impossible." Sammy's descent into mental illness was diagnosed as severe Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Tourette's and a number of other ailments, all promising a lifetime of disability; it wasn't until a family acquaintance, whose son exhibited the same symptoms for 10 years, urged Maloney to have Sammy tested for Strep that they learned his condition was treatable. Describing herself as "part courtroom lawyer and part detective," attorney Maloney perseveres with ferocity and sharp storytelling instincts, making this medical mystery-meant to inform families dealing with mental illness-a tear-wrenching crowd-pleaser. From *Booklist* At 12, Maloney's son Sammy won math awards but exhibited bizarre symptoms. The newly divorced mother's concerns grew as Sammy started hopping and spinning instead of walking and repeatedly resorted to uncontrollable headbanging. His disintegration, diagnosed without any thought about causation as sudden onset obsessive-compulsive disorder, included verbal tics, hours-long crying jags, and sporadic refusals to eat. Linking infection to "mental" illness, as strep antibodies are linked to the neurological Tourette's syndrome, has been rejected by many doctors since the rise of psychoanalysis, but Maloney insisted Sammy be tested for strep titers when he became unable to attend school and to walk. He was diagnosed with pediatric neuropsychiatric disorders associated with streptococcal infections, caused by strep antibodies attacking the basal ganglia controlling behavior. Antibiotics ended two torturous years for the family, and Sammy's regains came as rapidly as the symptoms had overtaken him. This stirring account of a mother's determination and a boy's

astonishing bravery makes you want to stand up and cheer. — Whitney

Scott — "SAVING SAMMY is a remarkable journey of a mother's perseverance to save her son. Her discoveries may well hold the key to curing the lives of millions of

others." — Daniel A. Geller, M.D. - Director Pediatric Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Program, Massachusetts General Hospital; Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical

School — "Of all the children I've treated, Sammy is the one at both ends of the spectrum. I'd never seen one so sick or one who came so far. I think the difference was his mother.

Her willingness to be aggressive and fight for her son may help in healing others." — Catherine D.

Nicolaidis, M.D. - Developmental Pediatrics - Marlton, New Jersey — "As a physician, SAVING SAMMY reminds me that we, as a profession, are prone to hubris. My heart aches for

Beth and her family every time I think of the dozens of doctors who scoffed and dismissed the incredibly valuable information she provided them. Consideration should be given for making

this book mandatory reading at all U.S. medical schools. As a parent, I am inspired because we

all will have our battles and issues. Few will be of this magnitude, but whether my child has

problems at school, the Y, summer camp or whatever, this story reminds me that there is no effort

too great to expend on the beautiful creatures that are our children. — Kevin Price,

M.D. General Surgeon, Southern Maine Medical Center Biddeford, Maine — "With

SAVING SAMMY, Beth Maloney is the first to document the harrowing journey as a mother of a son with strep-triggered OCD — known as PANDAS. This compelling story is written in such

a clear and engaging manner that the reader is hard pressed to put it down. — Ms.

Maloney —,s poignant description of both the ravages of the illness itself and the hurdles to find treatment not only sheds light on the dark corners of this disorder, but captures the universal

anguish of any parent watching their child slip away and at the same time being determined to hold

on with all their might. In this gripping memoir, we see living proof of the much contested connection

between strep and OCD. — We also experience the agony of a parent who knows that

solutions are out there, but can only be accessed by overcoming the obstacles and biases within

the medical community. By sharing her family's ordeal and ultimate triumph, Ms. Maloney urges us

all to make a pivotal shift in how we look at mental illness and its cure. The quality of life for

thousands, if not millions, of families depends on our doing so. — Tamar Chansky, Ph.D. -

Author: Freeing Your Child from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Freeing Your Child from Anxiety

and Freeing Your Child from Negative Thinking Director, Children's Center for OCD and Anxiety,

Plymouth Meeting PA — "There isn't a parent who would not want to have this

information. The implications of this riveting story reach far beyond children who are afflicted

with obsessive-compulsive disorder." — Christopher P. Leddy — Assistant Attorney General, State of Maine — "I might not have believed Sammy's stunning transformation if I had not seen it for myself." — I watched a gifted young mathematician robbed of his life, lose all control and hope, and then regain his former self. — Beth Maloney's relentless battle and ultimate success in reclaiming her son captures the heart of anyone who has ever loved a child. — Her victory sheds new light on ways of treating mental illness and inspires us all to greater good. — Fern Brown, M.S.Ed, CAS Gifted and Talented Coordinator - Co-Director, Maine Odyssey of the Mind From the Hardcover edition.

I have read this book cover to cover four times. The first time it was on a recommendation of a parent to purchase for our school district's parent resource center. I loved the book then because it's a story about a mother trusting her instincts to be persistent in getting her child the help he needed, even through a tremendous amount of obstacles and naysayers. Little did I know it would eventually become much more personal. Some years later when I connected that it might be a book helpful to my own family I reread it. It has helped guide our family in trusting our own instincts. While every child with PANDAS/PANS may have different presentations of the illness, the struggles, the heartbreak and the work to find help to save a child's life are similar. The book gives hope to families who have literally overnight lost the child they knew. While this illness presents itself in ways that are very hard to even comprehend 'Saving Sammy' allows us to know that even at it's most severe we cannot stop seeking the answer to healing. Due to sharing Sammy's story, many families who are now experiencing this horrible illness can find help earlier on. I loved this book from the first time I read it. I would recommend everyone reading it along with the author's other book 'Childhood Interrupted' which gives some concrete ways to move forward in seeking help. I can't thank Beth Alison Maloney and her family enough for sharing Sammy's story with the world. In their story of hope and healing we can find the strength we need.

This book was brilliantly written. When I read this book, I was on our journey with my son who has PANDAS. This book provided me with so much insight and comfort. Beth Maloney did an outstanding job at helping me further understand PANDAS and also to not feel so isolated. It also assisted me in not being timid when it came to advocating for my son in all arenas. She is a warrior mom. I was able to share this book with numerous family members who found it so helpful in trying to understand my son's challenges. I would also recommend Beth's follow-up bold, "Childhood Interrupted". It is an excellent resource.

I believe, by mentioning this book to everyone you know, a tsunami of tortured families will safely be brought ashore. I, personally, know three families PANDAS hammers, including my own. This should be required reading for ALL medically licensed professionals, all who work with children as teachers or caregivers, every person who has a friend with a child. Word of mouth is imperative. You may be the random answer to a parent who is desperately seeking answers. Parents, never give up! Keep searching until your child's health improves, no matter how many health professionals you cycle through. You are living this. You observe your child each day. You are their best advocate and only hope. Remember that many diagnosed conditions may really be PANDAS. Bless this author for writing this book. I would give it ten stars if I could!

This book raises awareness for parents of children who have been diagnosed with OCD and/or Tourette's and the direct link to PANDAS the way Jenny McCarthy's book, "Louder than Words," raised awareness for parents of children with autism and the direct link to gluten. It is a must read for anyone. This story tells the tale of a mother struggling to save her child, Sammy, from his sudden onset of unusual behavior. These behaviors ranged from mild idiosyncrasies, in the beginning, to almost full-blown psychosis. Imagine watching your once healthy and normal child suddenly display symptoms such as: walking and eating dinner with eyes squished shut, refusing to use soap in the shower, or for that matter, showering; bursting into angry fits, crying and laughing within a matter of minutes, sliding against walls, stepping over imaginary walls, refusing to go out the front door, refusing to touch door knobs, or to even look at toes. The rituals he had to go through to even enter or exit a van were hour-long, painful excursions. And also imagine that this was a 12 year-old child who once was a math genius, and, with the onset of this unknown syndrome, was reduced to lying underneath couch covers. But imagine the worst part, this child, Sammy, knows there is something wrong and wants so badly to be better. Clearly, the author was disturbed by her son's behaviors and took him to numerous doctors. He was misdiagnosed several times. He was given the wrong medications numerous times. Some doctors were patronizing; others, indifferent. Still, this mother never stopped trying to find a cure for her son. This book does not read like a novel; rather, it reads more like a true-crime drama. Because, in the end, that's what it was. That this child suffered so long is a disgrace. (That is my opinion; the author does not state the same feeling.) The writing is analytical, sequential, detailed; rarely engaging in self pity or accusations. but at the same time, the author vividly recounts the emotions of herself and her other two sons. When her doctors could not provide a cure, she began to research. Many hours a day were attributed to

this activity, as well as catering to the demand of an ever-needy, fully symptomatic OCD-ridden child, and the needs and wants of her other two sons...Finally, after all of her many hours of research, detailed observation, numerous doctor's appointments, and phone calls, she became convinced there was a strep factor. (PANDAS.) She was right. She had to convince a few doctors; some still remain unconvinced. The author, herself, is a "guardian ad litem." ( That is, a guardian appointed by the court to protect the interests of a minor.) One would think that a person with this type of background would have every type of resource at their fingertips for any situation involving any child. Sadly, this is not true. That is disturbing in that she had to fight for information that one would think would be easily available to her. This book poignantly points out the very reason we must be our own healthcare advocates. ..I read this book in a matter of one night. It was that interesting. I felt heartbreak for her family as well as joy when they felt it. This book should be read by everyone. The strep connection that was uncovered here is still not widely talked about. I had no idea before I read this book. YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS.

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