

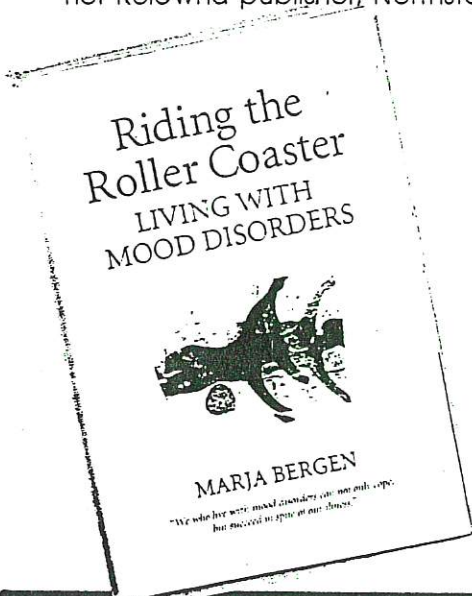
Last week I picked up a couple of copies of Marja Bergen's new book "Riding The Roller Coaster". This slim volume was highly recommended by a member of my support group and, being the group's ad hoc librarian, I am always looking for helpful books.

I was thrilled to find such a wonderful take on the manic-depressive experience. Marja has struggled with the condition for 30 years and has much to share about dealing well with it in her life. She lives in Vancouver and is an award-winning photographer and freelance writer. In this book I see a kindred spirit using her hard-fought knowledge, gleaned from "riding the roller coaster" of mood disorders, to make the way a little less precarious for fellow travelers.

The book is constructed of brief quotes from many sources, personal accounts and insights of her bipolar experience, and bite-sized essays on its many aspects. It's brimming with wisdom, forgiveness, acceptance and practical advice.

I especially appreciate the "we" tense used throughout and the positive acknowledgment of the good things about an illness that is often portrayed as a hopeless and relentlessly awful condition.

Here's one of my favourite essays, reproduced with the generous permission of Marja and her Kelowna publisher, Northstone.



## Begin It!

*Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.*

*Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.*

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

You may not believe that you're talented. You may believe that talent is inherent in only a few people. Although it's true that there is a genetic factor, all of us *do* have innate abilities of one sort or another; they only need to be awakened.

Fear holds many of us back from trying creative activities. We're afraid that we won't succeed – that we'll be failures. As a result we don't try at all, and that truly *is* a failure.

We all have the ability to be a virtuoso in one field or another. To bring this ability out we must believe in ourselves. Special inborn gifts are not as significant as using whatever resources we *do* have to advantage. If we can learn to use whatever we have instead of complaining about what we lack, we will succeed.

I can't draw, but I can do photography. My sister, a dancer who was forced to retire, has found expression in sculpture, another three-dimensional art form. Someone uninterested in creating pieces of art may be very creative in how he or she gives support to a sick neighbor. Creativity is valuable in all fields of human endeavor.

Developing our own special area of creativity means, to begin with, being alert to what moves us. We must learn to listen to our heart when we see and hear the music and artwork around us. What excites us? What makes us feel good? Are we itching to try that technique ourselves? Do we feel inspired? As we move around our community looking at books, pictures, movies, theater, we may find something awaken inside us – a desire to try something ourselves.

When we become aware of this "tugging at the heart," it's important not to procrastinate, but to act on it. Procrastinating will only kill that delicious urge – that appetite – to make something of our own. It will postpone our opportunity to be empowered to speak, to have our unique voice heard through our creative projects. Today is the best day to begin finding the joy, satisfaction, and self-esteem that creativity can bring.

*this book should be standard issue for all people diagnosed with manic-depression!*