Let’s Pretend This Never Happened by Jenny Lawson

When Jenny Lawson was little, all she ever wanted was to fit in. That dream was cut short by her fantastically unbalanced father and a childhood of wearing winter shoes made out of used bread sacks. It did, however, open up an opportunity for Lawson to find the humor in the strange shame-spiral that is her life, and we are all the better for it. Lawson's long-suffering husband and sweet daughter help her uncover the surprising discovery that the most terribly human moments -- the ones we want to pretend never happened -- are the very same moments that make us the people we are today.


About the Author: Jennifer Lawson (born 1973) is an American journalist, author and blogger from Wall, Texas. She is a graduate of Angelo State University. She is the author of The Bloggess and Ill Advised blogs, co-author of Good Mom/Bad Mom on the Houston Chronicle and a columnist for SexIs magazine. She is well known for her irreverent writing style. (Retrieved from Wikipedia)

Questions for Discussion

1. What specific aspects of Lawson's childhood particularly intrigued or repelled you? Is it possible to have both reactions at the same time?

2. What are some ways in which the book explores themes of individuality?

3. Were you surprised by the ending of Stanley the Magical Squirrel? Is it possible to find laughter in such horrific stories?

4. Lawson describes her hometown as “violently rural” and struggles to find a point to its existence. In your opinion, did growing up in this town help or hinder her?

5. Some reviewers have said this book is about individuality, and others feel it’s a book about family. What do you believe is the overall theme of the book?

6. Lawson and her husband have extremely different personalities, beliefs, and political backgrounds, yet they’ve managed to stay happily married. What is behind the success of their relationship? In what ways can being opposites help people in a relationship?

7. Lawson wrote about her OCD, phobias, and other mental struggles. Did this make her more or less relatable to you? Have you or has someone you know had a phobia or mental illness so severe that it
affected your life?

8. Lawson made the decision to infuse humor into even her most traumatic stories of dealing with infertility, loss, and arthritis. What do you think of this choice? Have you ever used humor for healing?

9. Lawson had family members read and vet the book before it was published, giving them the opportunity to give their opinions on the writing. Is this a good idea for a memoirist? Is it ultimately stifling or respectful? Are there times when someone’s life story is not his or hers to tell?

10. What did you think about the author’s voice, her use of run–on sentences, stream–of–consciousness narrative, profanity, and invented words to create a unique narrative?

11. In the chapter about infertility, Lawson discusses her struggles with suicidal tendencies. What purpose does this section have in the narrative?

12. This book deals with mental illness, poverty, suicide, miscarriage, disease, and other traumatic subjects, yet most people consider it a humor book. Do you agree with this classification?

13. What was your favorite story? Why?

14. Of all the people described in the book, whom did you most relate to or empathize with, and why?

15. What do you think Lawson was looking for in her life? Do you think she has found it? (Questions issued by publisher.)