



Running Free - Breaking Out From Locked-In Syndrome

Kate Allatt

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Can you imagine being trapped in your own body? Able to see and hear everything going on around you but unable to move or speak - the blink of an eye your only way to communicate. Super-fit young mother-of-three Kate Allatt's life was torn apart when she became locked in her own body after suffering a massive stroke caused by a blood clot to her brainstem. Left totally paralysed and unable to speak, her chances of survival were 50/50 and doctors said she would never walk or talk again. She wanted to die. But her family and best friends willed her to live and with their love and support she channelled her sense of fun and fighting spirit into making a miracle recovery that amazed medical experts. Using a letter chart Kate blinked the words I will walk againA". Soon she was moving her thumb and communicating with the world via Facebook. Eight months later she said goodbye to nurses and walked out of hospital to return home and start training for her first run.

Running Free - Breaking Out From Locked-In Syndrome Details

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Trish says

Non-Fiction; Biography

4+ stars

Imagine going from your fast-paced, busy life to only being able to control the blinking of your eyes in a matter of minutes. This is exactly what happened to Kate Allatt when she suffered from a massive stroke in her brain stem.

At almost 40, Kate was an active Mom to three young kids. Like most Moms, her life was demanding with schedules to coordinate, a family to manage and a home to run. In a split second, that life was taken from her without warning and she was left to face a life of complete dependency due to her body being "locked-in" after her stroke.

This book hits home to me as I have a classmate who had a stroke at age 36 and still suffers from this terrible syndrome. Unfortunately for my friend, her recovery has not been as miraculous. Though this book does offer a glimmer of hope for her future.

4+ stars

Amanda says

This was an inspiring book. I can't even imagine what Kate and her family went through during her experience, and even now as life is still so different for them compared to what it had been before her stroke and becoming locked-in. Kate is one of those people who never stops, and she worked very hard not only to walk again, but to become as independent as possible, returning to as much of her pre-stroke life as possible, with as little medical intervention needed. However, as a Christian, one particular line stood out to me and made me ache for her. When she returned to visit her main doctor after a significant amount of time had passed, during which she made huge strides in returning to "normal," the doctor commented on how far she'd come and said she must have had "divine intervention." Rather than acknowledge God, she was offended that the doctor would give credit to anyone other than herself for the hard work that she had put in. She DID work very hard, and yet I know that without God, no amount of work is worth anything. I pray that she realizes this someday.

Erin says

Almost a 4. Didn't know much about locked in syndrome. How horrible to know what is going on but, no one knows you understand. Amazing recovery story.

Michelle Albert says

I LOVED this book! It was such an inspirational story of a 39 year old woman who had a stroke and was literally trapped inside her own body. Her story of determination, positive thinking and just sheer will was amazing. I encourage anyone who is feeling they can't overcome any obstacle to read this book!

Deborah says

Can you imagine being trapped in your own body? Able to see and hear everything going on around you but unable to move or speak - the blink of an eye your only way to communicate. Super-fit young mother-of-three Kate Allatt's life was torn apart when she became locked in her own body after suffering a massive stroke caused by a blood clot to her brainstem. Left totally paralysed and unable to speak, her chances of survival were 50/50 and doctors said she would never walk or talk again. She wanted to die. But her family and best friends willed her to live and with their love and support she channelled her sense of fun and fighting spirit into making a miracle recovery that amazed medical experts. Using a letter chart Kate blinked the words I will walk againA". Soon she was moving her thumb and communicating with the world via Facebook. Eight months later she said goodbye to nurses and walked out of hospital to return home and start training for her first run.

Kath says

First of all this is the account of a devastating stroke on a young woman who was previously very active and of her heroic efforts to recover. To criticise the book seems mean but I feel it might have been better written by somebody else on her behalf. Kate comes across as rather supercilious and cannot resist dropping in many privileged lifestyle allusions and references to her many previous achievements. Her attitude to the NHS hospital staff also appears to lack some common courtesy and gratitude. However she has done a lot for charity and her friends and family obviously love her to bits. Kate makes little allowance to those who try as hard but are not able to recover. It would be worth comparing this account to that of Melanie Reid who weekly writes poignantly in 'The Times' about living with tetraplegia.

Kim Berry says

This was an incredible journey for an amazing woman that was full of determination and not taking 'no' for an answer. I cannot even begin to imagine how you go from a busy life with your family and friends to sustaining a massive stroke to which you could only communicate through your eyes for several long months. It takes a special bond with your family, friends and caretakers, even though it appeared to be very rough and frustrating, she did it...she was able to show the world that she would one day go back to her life. It makes me incredibly thankful for having a good life and being healthy!

Kristi Hyde says

Amazing inspirational true story about the will to survive and regain your life. Her story was intriguing, a new topic I had not heard of and am so glad I now know about. I would have given it more stars had her writing style been cleaner and more engaging, if I was English and understood all the media references & certain English phrases. Definitely a book you should read!

Gemma Zajac says

I really appreciate Kate writing this book after caring for people with locked in syndrome and it made me understand a lot more about what it was like and how my care can be improved. A truly inspirational fight for life and Kate has worked amazingly hard towards recovery. However, I found her very pretentious and slightly annoying despite this. Her lack of gratitude and respect for the NHS staff just infuriated me.

Jennifer says

I'd read other reviews of this book so I had some idea what to expect of this story of a woman who spent most of 2010 recovering from a devastating bleed in her brain, from being locked in to being up and running. I could also see that it was a book written by the individual 'with' someone else. There's no particular reason this should result in a characteristic plodding style of writing but it almost invariably seems to and this book was just the same. I was interested because prior to her massive stroke Kate Allatt enjoyed running in the Peak District near her home, and also because I have cared for patients who have been similarly struck down. As it turns out, I also have personal experience of being disabled enough at times (fortunately for much briefer periods) that the only outward sign of consciousness is tears and the assumptions that are made... that was not a comfortable part of the book to read.

So...on the evidence here Kate Allatt is just not my sort of person, not before and not since her stroke. However, I strongly suspect that it is just this kind of self-obsessed individual who has the best chance of making this kind of recovery, and I wonder too if her capacity to have a rant and to wallow in self-pity at times actually liberated her to put the necessary effort in to make her life better and not need as much care. I note that many, many reviewers regard her as 'ungrateful' to the professionals involved in her care but I think that's making a mistake. She expresses her gratitude many times in the book in fact, sometimes it is grudging or belated, but she does not see NHS staff as 'angels'. In some ways she shows more respect than those who tend to gush in that way as she clearly shows that they are individuals. She spent months at their mercy which sounds dramatic but that is the way it is, and there is plenty for professionals (and others) to learn about how it feels, and the difference that someone 'getting' you can make, the small kindnesses, the small unkindnesses (some unthinking, some misguided and some just downright nasty) Too much of it rang very true to me and made me wonder about what more could have been done for my patients whose story did not progress in the same positive way (and whose families fought hard too)

She has a lot to say about low expectations but I sometimes wonder if those are not put there to produce just the reaction she had: proving them wrong (this seems a common theme of such books). I wouldn't recommend this book to the general reader (it's not literature and those looking for inspiration porn are likely to be put off by the reality and 'ingratitude') but I think it would be an excellent book for therapists and nurses and those preparing for those roles. In fact I liked the stress on them as agents of care and rehabilitation rather than the medical profession.

It's an interesting read on the impact on her wider circle - her parents and in-laws, her husband, her friends who were everything she needed them to be. Some of this validates the approach of seemingly documenting every emotion - I have little doubt she'd've done the same if the situation had been reversed. It did seem remarkable that her husband should take the family away on holiday thus missing her birthday despite her objecting and not being martyred and "Oh of course you should go off and have fun without me" - but the two of them are clearly cut from the same cloth and understand one another and she comes to respect many of the decisions made. She chooses to insist on being discharged from hospital whilst he's still away on business, again, an interesting choice.

Lots to think about but a clunky read.

Jamie says

This book is a true-life story about writer Kate Allat and her life altering experience with LIS. Kate was a young mother of 3, a wife, a runner, and an adventurer. Always one to push herself to be the very best that she could - she certainly was in for the ride of her life on February 6th 2010. Kate suffers a massive stroke of the brainstem, and is basically thought to be in a vegetative state. However - she is not a complete vegetable, she is actually suffering from Locked In Syndrome. With her mind fully working, but her body only able to blink her eyes, Kate certainly has a long road of recovery ahead of her.

This is her story over a one year time span. The story is inspiring of course - once I did more research on LIS, it is apparent that Kate is one of the very few to make a practically full recovery. most patients regain very little and die before more progress is made.

This book certainly helps to remind us that we cannot take life for granted, that it is futile, and can change in the...well, blink of an eye. No pun intended.

The story itself is written in a way, that I found myself confused a few times over the progression of her recovery. I wasn't sure if it was going back and forth, or if I was just misreading things. I sometimes found Kate's attitude a little much to deal with, but then again I have never been in a hospital fighting to get my life back, so I cannot say that I wouldn't get down right bossy either. I'm guessing its because I have a very different personality, so it was hard for me to take it all in.

Either way, Kate definitely has a runners heart, and that I could totally relate to. I did find myself cheering her and her family and friends on throughout the book.

I got this ebook free from kindle, which I was happy about. But I did find a lot of typos and things that kind of got to me a bit. So, if that sort of thing gets to you, you have been warned. (haha.)

I gave this book four stars because I enjoyed the positive vibes and hope. I do recommend others to read it, because it sheds a whole new light on strokes, and really life altering medical ailments in general.

Barbara says

Interesting read for those that have Locked-In Syndrome from a stroke. For me it showed and proved that

even if the body is not able to move - it doesn't mean the mind has stopped working.
It was also motivational. It shows the power of the mind and spirit and being stubborn helps!
It was a good book and I would recommended it to anyone that is interested in learning about this syndrome.

Alex says

Fascinating story but could have done with some serious editing. It's very much the author's voice and you may or may not agree with some of her perspectives, but given the circumstances these should definitely be seen from a generous position. However, the book says the same things several times and things like timescales get very blurry.

Kirsten Weaver says

I think hearing the story from this perspective was really interesting. Her struggles were obviously severe, and while I understood that, I still felt she was a bit pretentious and a bit annoying. She seemed to come for a very privileged "party" lifestyle that doesn't really sit well with me...but to each their own. I thought she repeated herself a lot and could have condensed down her story. I was glad she finally expressed appreciation for her husband because throughout the book I thought she was a bit rough on him.

Overall, I can't judge too much...she had a pretty hard struggle.

Vicky says

Amazing story about an amazing woman. Her story shows what hard work and determination can do.
