

# Choosing Dance Over Despair: A Memoir Illuminating Joy, Recovery, and the Human Spirit

*A Journey of Living and Thriving with Serious Mental Illness  
in a Courageous, Hope-Filled Memoir*

IOWA CITY, IA, UNITED STATES, May 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Mental illness is often viewed through the lens of stigma and silence but in *Choosing Dance Over Despair: How I Found Keys to*

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*Margalea Warner*

*Joy and Recovery While Living With Serious Mental Illness*, author Margalea Warner boldly steps into the light. In this deeply personal and powerfully written memoir, Warner opens the curtains on her decades-long journey with schizophrenia, sharing how she discovered joy, purpose, and resilience while navigating the complexities of mental health recovery.

Rooted in vulnerability, faith, and the healing power of creativity, this book serves as a love letter to anyone living with mental illness or loving someone who is. It also calls to mental health advocates and champions of inclusive

storytelling who are ready to change the narrative surrounding mental illness.

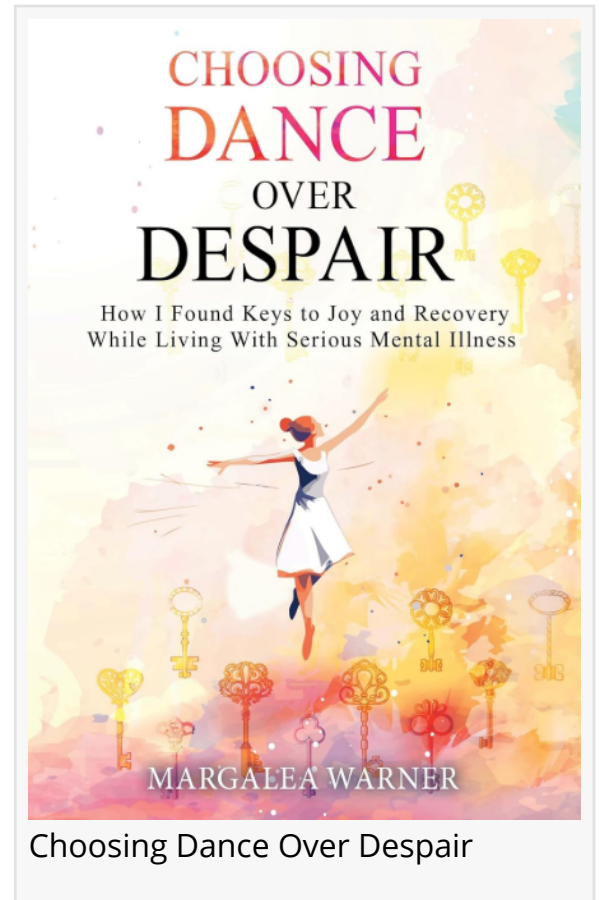
While Margalea Warner may not be a ballerina, her life inspired a ballet. In November 2022, *Unfinished*, a ballet inspired by Warner’s story of recovery, premiered at Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City. *Choosing Dance Over Despair* gives readers a front-row seat, not only to that moment but to the disciplined, decades-long dance of living fully while managing serious mental illness.

Warner writes with grace, grit, and grounded faith, weaving together stories of medication, therapy, trauma, spiritual resilience, and the sacred role of community. Just as dancers train their bodies, Margalea has trained her spirit to choose joy over pain and movement over stagnation. Her dance partners? Medication, talk therapy, spiritual practice, and fierce determination.

In these pages, she doesn’t just recount her past, she offers readers the keys to finding joy, courage, and hope in their own lives. This book is a powerful invitation to move, to heal, and to embrace the full humanity of those living with mental illness.

"I tell my story of ongoing mental health recovery so I don't forget how far I've come. I tell my story to engage my peers suffering from mental illness with empathy and compassion. I tell my story to offer the friends and families of persons on a mental health journey hope and support. I tell my story because I can't not tell my story—God created me as a storyteller raised by a family that valued sharing and listening to each other's stories. I hope my story evokes others' stories and that the conversation continues with grace and insight." - Margalea Warner

Margalea Warner is a triumphant tortoise, having persisted in creative writing since age five and into her mid-sixties. A retired hospital secretary and lifelong storyteller, Warner has found renewed purpose in writing and speaking. Her devotionals, poems, and essays are crafted to uplift and inspire, drawing from her lived experience with mental illness and her unshakeable faith.



Warner has spoken to medical students, church groups, and law enforcement about mental health, aiming to humanize and educate through her story. She is a proud member of First Mennonite Church of Iowa City, where she considers herself a great aunt to all the children in her congregation. She currently lives in Iowa City with her beloved cat, Helen of Toy. This book is her offering of hope, compassion, and connection, a testimony to God's grace and the power of choosing dance over despair.

This book is available immediately via [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0F9223M3B) (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0F9223M3B>) starting at \$3.99.

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