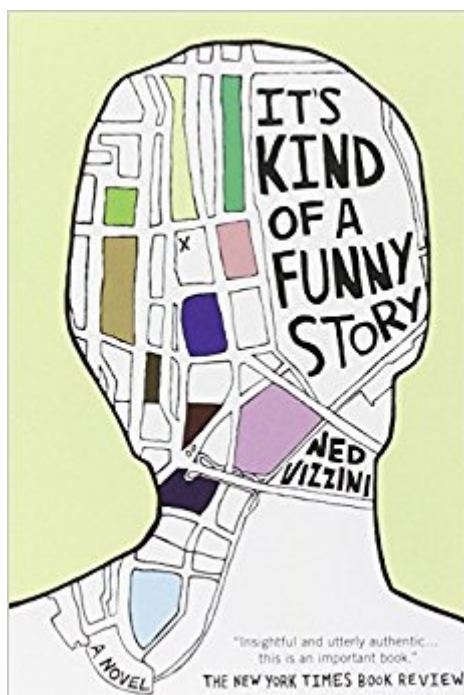


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# It's Kind Of A Funny Story



## Synopsis

Like many ambitious New York City teenagers, Craig Gilner sees entry into Manhattan's Executive Pre-Professional High School as the ticket to his future. Determined to succeed at life-which means getting into the right high school to get into the right college to get the right job-Craig studies night and day to ace the entrance exam, and does. That's when things start to get crazy. At his new school, Craig realizes that he isn't brilliant compared to the other kids; he's just average, and maybe not even that. He soon sees his once-perfect future crumbling away. The stress becomes unbearable and Craig stops eating and sleeping-until, one night, he nearly kills himself. Craig's suicidal episode gets him checked into a mental hospital, where his new neighbors include a transsexual sex addict, a girl who has scarred her own face with scissors, and the self-elected President Armelio. There, isolated from the crushing pressures of school and friends, Craig is finally able to confront the sources of his anxiety. Ned Vizzini, who himself spent time in a psychiatric hospital, has created a remarkably moving tale about the sometimes unexpected road to happiness. For a novel about depression, it's definitely a funny story.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up-When 15-year-old Craig Gilner is accepted by a prestigious Manhattan high school, the pressure becomes taxing, and he finds himself battling depression. Partying and drugs don't help. As his illness intensifies, he is aided by his supportive family and perceptive therapist. A prescription for Zoloft improves things, until Craig decides that he is better and stops taking it. In a revitalized state of depression, he calls a suicide-prevention hotline and then checks into a hospital, where the

only space available is in the adult psychiatric wing. There, he receives the help he needs, discovers his hidden artistic talents, and connects with the quirky patients who have plenty of problems of their own, including Noelle, a girl his own age. Craig's well-paced narrative, carefully and insightfully detailing his confusing slide and his desperate efforts to get well, is filled with humor and pathos. His thoughts reveal a sensitive teen unsure about sex, friendships, himself, and his future. An almost unbelievable amount of self-realization, including his first two romantic encounters, occurs in the whirlwind five-day hospital stay. However, the book ends on a note of hope, despite Craig's unwise anticipation of a relationship with Noelle. This novel will appeal to readers drawn to Brent Runyon's *The Burn Journals* (Knopf, 2004), which is another powerful but more extreme look at a likable teen returning from the brink of suicide. -Diane P. Tuccillo, City of Mesa Library, AZ  
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**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 9-12. When Craig Gilner gets into Manhattan's exclusive Executive Pre-Professional High School, it's the culmination of a year of intense focus and grinding hard work. Now he has to actually attend the school with other equally high-performing students. Oops. And so the unraveling begins, with a depressed Craig spending more time smoking dope and throwing up than studying. Although medication helps his depression, he decides to stop taking it. Soon after, he makes another decision: to commit suicide. A call to a suicide hotline gets him into a psychiatric hospital, where he is finally able to face his demons. Readers must suspend their disbelief big time for this to work. Because the teen psych ward is undergoing renovations, Craig is put in with adults, which provides the narrative with an eccentric cast of characters rather than just similarly screwed-up teens. And in his five days in the hospital, Craig manages to cure his eating disorder, find a girlfriend, realize he wants to be an artist, and solve many of his co-residents' problems, including locating Egyptian music for his roommate, who won't get out of bed. What could he do if he wasn't depressed! But what's terrific about the book is Craig's voice--intimate, real, funny, ironic, and one kids will come closer to hear. Many readers will be familiar with the drugs, the sexual experimentation, the language, and, yes, the depression--or they'll know someone who is. This book offers hope in a package that readers will find enticing, and that's the gift it offers. Ilene Cooper  
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"It's Kind of a Funny Story" is a book that's been on my "To-Read" list for quite some time, however,

with the recent passing of author Ned Vizzini, I thought the best way to honor a writer was to make sure the works they left behind are read. Hence, I moved it to the top of my reading list. The story follows a teen-aged protagonist who grows suicidal after his life takes a drastic turn. This results in his stay in a psychiatric ward. Here, he meets a cast of interesting characters and basically "finds himself." What this book does best is showcases what it really means to be depressed--to help shed light on what is too often thought of as a taboo subject despite that we are all bound to experience it in one way or another. While this is an inspirational and educational story presented in an entertaining way, there is also an underlying eerie feeling to it due to knowing Ned Vizzini suffered depression and recently committed suicide. While reading the story, one can't help but to wonder if some of the thoughts presented by the main character were indeed the real thoughts of Vizzini. The line between fiction and reality become blurred. If the knowledge of this makes you uncomfortable, this may not be a good choice for you to read. However, it is my hope that as tragic as Vizzini's end was, hopefully his modern-day masterpiece helps take some of the shame away from seeking mental health services and battling depression. His story and his life may be the tool to help save the life of someone else. R.I.P. Ned Vizzini.

I gave this book four stars because I felt like it helped me to better understand people that I care about who have struggled with severe depression or anxiety. Craig's story of setting ambitious goals and expecting to find happiness and satisfaction when he achieves them is easily relatable. That behavior is certainly not limited to teenagers, or to those that become clinically depressed. Craig has his own language to describe his depression. He refers to the conflicting obligations that are overwhelming and depressing him as 'tentacles', while the things that help him to empty his brain (his goal) are called 'anchors'. I would like to think that someone who may be contemplating suicide would read it, follow in Craig's footsteps, and get help for themselves. If this book even increases that chance at all, it is valuable for that alone. Why I did not give 5 stars? I didn't really love the book the way some people did, from a pure enjoyment of the story standpoint. I had no trouble putting it down. I'm glad I read it, but don't feel like I'm likely to read it again. This is rare for me because I am always desperate for something to read.

For what I was looking for it was a very great book. Beautifully written Ned Vizzini captures the mind of depression so well. It should have a trigger warning though which I am not sure if it does or not but for those who are clinically depressed and not currently seeking help this is not for you. Other than that read on! For what it's worth the book was in great condition and came on time.

Craig is a 15 year old battling clinical depression. After going off his medication, he decides to kill himself by jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge. He ends up calling a suicide hotline instead and they direct him to the nearest emergency room where he checks in for a minimum five day stay in the adult psychiatric ward (adult because the teen ward is closed for renovations). While there he meets a colorful group of people and makes important decisions for his future. He figures out how to cut the Tentacles that are stressing him out and finds an Anchor that brings him happiness. In the end, he is not cured. He is still battling depression, but he makes the conscious choice to live and enjoy his life.

It's Kind of a Funny Story by Ned Vizzini is very well written and realistic as it is based on the author's own stay on a psych ward. The writing does an excellent job capturing the fractured thinking that paralyzes Craig and stops him from being able to get anything done. I like how in the end Craig is still depressed since it's not something that can be cured in just five days, but he chooses to see life differently following his stay at the hospital. I highly recommend this book!

full review posted on <http://myriadinklings.wordpress.com> Honestly, this is one of the books that have been sitting on my shelf for almost a year now. I picked this book as part of my new TBR jar, and I'm glad this was the first read from that. This was an eye-opener for me. I can't recall ever reading a book before with heavy subjects such as depression or suicide. I would honestly definitely recommend this book to anyone who is comfortable enough with those subjects. If you are worrying about the sadness of this book, it's not. Vizzini has this way of staying true to the story's message, yet making it still readable and not heavy. I feel like Craig's journey is very inspirational, and I found this read overall to be very enjoyable.

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