



Run, Don't Walk: The Curious and Chaotic Life of a Physical Therapist Inside Walter Reed Army Medical Center

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M*A*S*H meets *Scrubs* in a sharply observant, darkly funny, and totally unique debut memoir from physical therapist Adele Levine.

In her six years at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Adele Levine rehabilitated soldiers admitted in worse and worse shape. As body armor and advanced trauma care helped save the lives—if not the limbs—of American soldiers fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, Walter Reed quickly became the world leader in amputee rehabilitation. But no matter the injury, physical therapy began the moment the soldiers emerged from surgery.

Days at Walter Reed were intense, chaotic, consuming, and heartbreaking, but they were also filled with camaraderie and humor. Working in a glassed-in fishbowl gymnasium, Levine, her colleagues, and their combat-injured patients were on display at every moment to tour groups, politicians, and celebrities. Some would shudder openly at the sight—but inside the glass and out of earshot, the PTs and the patients cracked jokes, played pranks, and compared stumps.

With dazzling storytelling, *Run, Don't Walk* introduces a motley array of oddball characters including: Jim, a retired lieutenant-colonel who stays up late at night baking cake after cake, and the militant dietitian who is always after him; a surgeon who only speaks in farm analogies; a therapy dog gone rogue; —and Levine's toughest patient, the wild, defiant Cosmo, who comes in with one leg amputated and his other leg shattered.

Entertaining, engrossing, and ultimately inspiring, *Run, Don't Walk* is a fascinating look into a hidden world.

Run, Don't Walk: The Curious and Chaotic Life of a Physical Therapist Inside Walter Reed Army Medical Center Details

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From Reader Review Run, Don't Walk: The Curious and Chaotic Life of a Physical Therapist Inside Walter Reed Army Medical Center for online ebook

Michelle says

Physical therapist and author Adele Levine has written this stunning and superb medical tribute of the war amputee's injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, that return within 72 hours of combat injury to Walter Reed Medical Center Bethesda, MD. The rehabilitative therapy began immediately and was supported by a team of outstanding, dedicated military and civilian medical professionals.

Remembering:

Army SSgt Nathan L. Wyrick - October 10 2011 - Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

Many thanks to the Penguin Group for the advance reading copy I won in the Goodreads giveaway. My formal review will be posted on Amazon.

Mara Richards says

I liked this book. It is about Adele Levine (the author) who writes about her life as a physical therapist who works with recent amputees in a army medical center in DC. I really liked how the story had such an honest perspective regarding success and failure, and how we define those words, not only in the context of the soldiers she is treating who have sustained very serious injuries as a result of war, but also in the context of her own job and life. I thought she told her story, as well as the stories of the soldiers and her coworkers in a way that was empathetic, funny and powerful all at once.

Rage says

I loved this book. it made me laugh out loud, and it made me very sad. rather than a linear narrative, the author shares essays about various experiences from her time at the old Walter Reed as a PT for amputees. I think it's very important to be aware of the costs of war, and this book shares details about the injuries that (mostly) soldiers and Marines receive. it also shares what the schedule of a PT is like, and we learn all about the author, who is a bit of a character herself. I think several of the characters are composites, but everyone felt real. it gave me a great appreciation for a lot of different facets of humanity.

Darcy says

I'm not really sure how this book crossed my radar, but at some time I requested it from my library and low and behold when I went to pick up my holds it was there. I didn't really remember requesting it, but found myself intrigued all over again.

I found my feelings bouncing all over the place while reading this one. Admiration for the patients, not sure if I could/would handle myself with as much grace as they did, sorrow that the patients had to deal with learning to live in a new way, if only there was world peace, and laughter, because really it is the best medicine of all. I liked how the author would try to show all aspects of things and wasn't afraid to show the

not so bright side. Overall you could see genuine caring all the PT's had for their patients and how they wished for clear sailing for them.

Liralen says

Reading this, I was reminded strongly of Weekends at Bellevue. Not so much the content, although both authors work(ed) in what I'd call high-stress medical settings, but the impression both authors give of having been that kid, in high school, who sat in the back of the room, goofed off, never seemed to study -- and then aced all the tests anyway.

Except Holland was probably wearing tight jeans and artfully distressed hair, while Levine was wearing frayed sweatshirts and a mop on her head because she lost her hairbrush two weeks ago.

I'm making stuff up, if that wasn't clear already -- Levine is pretty careful about how personal she gets here. While she's forthright (and very, very funny) about physical therapy and the various scrapes that she and her coworkers get into, major players in her life (Ashley, her parents, etc.) play a limited role, and I don't think that's by accident. Actually, at times it made me wonder whether this was written more as a series of interconnected essays before being turned into book form -- although there's certainly development of characters and so on throughout the book, there are also people whose stories (or stories as they relate to Adele) are told over the course of a chapter, and then they never appear again.

Levine maintains a tough balance between truthful storytelling and privacy concerns -- she clearly cares for and respects her patients, and she was also (at the time of writing) still employed at Walter Reed, so it stands to reason that she'd be careful. That said, I strongly wished it had been clear up front that Cosmo and Pigeon, especially, were composite characters. I understand and respect the decision to protect patients' privacy, but knowing that they were composites did make me go back and rethink. It does make me wonder whether that's why she talks about so few long-haul patients (another thing that I wanted more of) -- privacy concerns.

Although I wanted more about working with patients, what there is about PT-patient relations is both very funny (the "It's a Miracle" test -- I read that whole section out to my s.o., and we both just about died laughing -- and Jim's marathon, for example) and very poignant. She doesn't make a big deal of it, but it's clear that both Levine and her coworkers will go the extra mile -- watching a patient's surgery because the patient doesn't have family around to do so, or patiently having the exact same conversation, day in and day out, with a soldier with mild TBI.

I'm passing this one on to my s.o., and then it's going on the shelf to stay. It's a keeper.

I received a free copy of this book via a Goodreads giveaway.

Greta says

Walter Reed Army Medical Center was the longest-operating military hospital in the United States. Named after a young army doctor, Major Walter Reed, who discovered the cause of yellow fever, it opened its doors on May 1, 1909.

Over one hundred and two years, it treated patients from every major war from World War I forward, including victims of the attacks on the Pentagon and the recent military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. It

was officially closed on September 15, 2011.

The inpatients and most of the staff were relocated to a new hospital on the grounds of the National Naval Medical Center (known locally as Bethesda Naval Hospital). This new hospital is now called Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Bethesda.

Walter Reed -through necessity- became the world leader in the care of the poly-traumatic combat amputee.

The author wrote about her work as a physical therapist in the Amputee Section, rehabilitating mostly Iraq and Afghanistan war veteran amputees, who came to Walter Reed by no choice of their own.

The book provides the reader with a lot of interesting information about this institution, the work of the physical therapists in the amputee clinic and interesting details concerning the rehabilitation of the wounded soldiers, but it's also filled with stories of the author's personal life.

Although I would have liked to read more stories about the rehabilitative treatment of the soldiers, and less about the work-conditions of the physical therapists and the author's personal life, it was a fascinating and very accessible memoir.

I previously read Mary Roach's book Grunt: The Curious Science of Humans at War, and thought this book was a fitting companion piece.

Leslie Wolff says

Amazing story telling. Funny. Heart touching. Very interesting if you are interested in PT

Donna Davis says

I loved this memoir. It comes out in May, and you should get a copy. You don't have to be even slightly interested in reading about physical therapy to enjoy this book. It is a stellar memoir, entertaining and informational in a way that everyone can access and enjoy.

I got my copy through the First Reads program here on Goodreads.com. All that means these days is that I screened it before applying for a copy. I have a steady stream of free books coming in the mail, the wonderful symbiosis of retired-teacher-who-likes-free-books-and-writing versus publishing-houses-that-don't-want-to-pay-for-a-review. I have become fairly persnickety about what I'm willing to read and review--because to my way of thinking, it is not fair to accept the free book and not finish or review it, and I don't want to poison the well by asking for something I already suspect is not well written or that I may not be entertained or fulfilled by reading. So the publisher chose me, but first, I chose Levine's book.

I've been through physical therapy for things like whiplash from car accidents (yes, some folks really do get whiplash), but nothing like the scale experienced by the veterans and soldiers that Levine treats. And so the first sign of expertise is in the title (where she wisely excluded any reference to amputations), and the fact that it was dropped into the "humor" section of the Giveaways.

Ask yourself: is there a tasteful way to laugh about amputations and amputees, as well as the people who work with and/or visit them?

Amazingly, there is. She's found it. And at first I could not accept that this was Levine's first book, because the amount of synthesis and development of characters is not in any way rookie work, and I don't care how brilliant the writer might be. The book says "experienced writer". Everything clicked into place when I read

that she had been writing a weekly humor column (though what kind of over-achiever can work the hours she works, maintain a relationship, indulge in extreme sorts of physical exercise, write a column, and eventually even become a parent, is beyond me).

Sometimes people write a first book and they get insecure. They pass out free copies to friends and relatives and beg them to get on various readers' sites and post glowing reviews. So I will prove to you (assuming you are not someone who has read any of my other 500+ reviews) that I am not one of them. I FOUND A FLAW in the book! I did! Here it is:

Levine claims to own only two pieces of furniture during the time frame about which she writes. She has a futon sofa and a lamp. BUT!!! She rushes home to watch her favorite television program. AHA! If a lamp is furniture, then so is a television set.

I rest my case. I am entirely unbiased in my book reviews.

I didn't set out to learn anything here--it's not as if I am considering becoming a PT. And as stated, this should not be viewed as a niche book just for medical folk or military types, but for the general book-loving public. It would even make a good beach read.

But I learned some things, nevertheless. I didn't know that anyone who loses both legs ever has a shot at walking on two prostheses, for example (and indeed, some don't, but the possibility is strong). I didn't know some prostheses have computers. And I groaned at the obstacles put in place by the fishbowl atmosphere: deliberately limited computer access so that anyone, celebrities, congressional staff, or John Q. Public, will see the therapists ONLY working with patients, and then they have to stay after their paycheck ends in order to enter notes about progress registered, because people who come to see the circus don't want to see more than two people using a computer at a time. The banning of coffee for the same reason; nobody wants to see your cup! And I loved reading about the guerilla response to said ban.

There are a number of places I'd like to quote, but I read a galley, so I am not supposed to do that in case they make changes, and this review gets posted TODAY. Characters Cosmo and Major Dumont were favorites (and I will let you find out for yourself how they were developed). And I loved the Jim-quote and how it is used at a party full of insufferable assholes who think that they are really something because they went to Walter Reed and WATCHED the patients and therapists for awhile. (The punch line is awesome. Again: get the book.)

And I really loved the Miracle reference.

I was on my third day with this book (I generally read 4-6 at a time, so it was getting rotated with the others) when someone in my family died. It was a total fluke, someone younger than me whose time should not have been up yet, and it hit all of us in the solar plexus. The writer's chapter on the bone marrow transplant proved really cathartic. It wasn't written for that purpose; I just had the right book at the right time, and so I sat with the book in my hand and cried awhile. Thanks; I needed that.

Are you still reading my review? You have another window open too, right? Because you should buy this book, and if you get the chance to pre-order it, then you should do that so you won't accidentally let it go by once it's available. May is Mother's Day; what a great gift for the mother who likes to read!

To sum up: order the book for yourself. Order another copy for at least one of the mothers in your life. I promise you won't be sorry.

Margaret says

This book is about the physical therapist more than it is about military amputees but the story certainly shares a great deal of painful, uplifting and educational information about healing amputees. But in the end the story was about the author Adele Levine. I wanted less her, and more military. She was a bit annoying and I didn't really like her. And I thought her writing was average. I wanted more.

Alison says

As a PT who previously worked in an acute care and inpatient rehabilitation setting, I related to so much of the author's story. I relate to getting scolded by nursing after accidentally pulling out a surgical drain, and to taking 20 minutes just to gather up a patient's lines/tubes/drains so he/she can get out of bed, and to loving a patient even when they are sabotaging their own recovery, and to using humor to cope with the constant influx of patients with devastating injuries. I really enjoyed the book, and am glad that there is a PT out there who is gifted enough with writing to share their stories.

Virginia says

I found this bookordinary.

I thought it would be full of riveting stories that would make me laugh out loud or grab an extra box of tissues. I'm a military brat so I was really interested to hear about Walter Reed Hospital and all the trials and tribulations that happen there. Unfortunately..... I didn't find many of the situations funny or to terribly exciting, just found itordinary. The stories just seemed so mundane and felt like things that happen in any clinic or office, just change the names and scenery. I know that's life but I've gotten to the point where I want to read something that's more exciting than what I'm living day to day.

**I received this book in exchange for a review

Sandy Stiles says

An enjoyable and insightful book. I was definitely thinking of my sister, who was first a PT in the Army, and later a doctor who interned at Walter Reed, and finally, as a retired Colonel, had brain surgery at the new Walter Reed. Ms. Levine brings out the incredible commitment that her group has, which stretches way beyond just dealing with the physical difficulties of their patients. Despite her many stories, I still feel that we can barely understand what it must be like to treat our disabled war veterans, but I was glad to have raised my awareness at least a little.

Heather says

I found this book on a search for a different subject to read in the library. I wanted a book break from war biographies but I can't pull myself away from the veteran theme. It's great simple chapters to read in one

sitting if your a mother wanting to read at night. The subject hits several emotional levels and your funny bone. It's bare bones to a soldier's reality after being injured on the battlefield and Medevac to the states. You'll love the character Cosmo and feel a close attachment to each veteran you meet. In the end you'll see their human and cheering them to the end. It's medical educational and worth reading to understand that part of everyday life. Excellent find.

BrokenTune says

4.5*

It's not like I have run out of books to read, and yet, I keep picking this one up again and again re-reading parts.

Run, Don't Walk is the story of Adele Levine's (the author's) time as a physical therapist working with soldiers who had been wounded in combat, mostly Afghanistan, and needed to learn how to use their body again.

When I first picked up the book, I expected that this would be a hard read - and some of the stories are - but far from being a collection of stories of sadness and despair, there was a lot more to the book that I really enjoyed:

For one, I liked the detail in which Levine explained injuries, and more importantly, how they affected the persons day-to-day routine and how the physical therapists tried to come up with different ways to treat each person to maximise recovery.

I liked that it seemed an honest book about the successes and failures, and how it affected the patients but also the staff. Levine touches on, but doesn't dwell on, what hard work it must be for the medical staff to be exposed to so many injuries, not just physical but also mental, and how some of the medical staff were probably experiencing something like PTSD in their own right while trying to helps some of their patients convalesce.

What I liked most about it, though, is how Levine tells the stories - some with a sense of fun, some with a lot of empathy, but most of them with a lot of passion about the people around her.

Angie says

I liked this a lot more than I expected to. I feel like I've said that about a lot of books lately.

This book isn't about physical therapy. It isn't about politics. It isn't about regrets. It's a wonderful blend of humorous essays and memoir with more heart and truth than the average person will collect in a lifetime. Adele Levine gives us a look at her life as a physical therapist at Walter Reed Army Medical Center at the height of injuries coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

There's not a lot of medical speak, no PT jargon, or tons of language pulled out of an old anatomy textbook. There are characters in this book - not the fictional, made up, over the top characters - but 100% human folks who are characters in and of themselves. We meet Elijah, a former football player who can talk any wounded

soldier into going to PT with a kind word or just by taking up the entire doorframe with his massive body, intimidating them into action without realizing his effect. We meet Jim, the office foodie and baker who tries out new recipes (almost always successful) on his coworkers, bakes cakes for individual patients birthdays, and regularly takes his injured soldiers out to eat at new local restaurants. We meet Cosmo, a tough talking above-knee amputee whose favorite word is 'fuck' and favorite hobby is skipping therapy for a smoke in the smoking tent. We meet Tim Gunn (yes, *that* Tim Gunn), one of the only celebrities to come without press and fanfare to meet a female soldier that had a prosthetic leg made with a stiletto heel and took her shopping. (This is a really really small mention in the book but made me love Gunn even more.) The list goes on and each person seems as fascinating as the last. I think it takes exceptional people to do what these therapists do, dealing with the true cost of war - not dollars and cents, but legs, arms, and lives lost - and that is part of the reason there are so many characters that you want to befriend. These people seem exceptional because they *are* exceptional. Levine keeps the tone conversational throughout the book and her respect and admiration for those around her comes through. She's not patting herself or her coworkers on the back. There's no "look at what we do! Aren't we grand?" If anything, it's the opposite with a little downplaying of their impact and importance. Levine points out regularly that they are but one part of the puzzle but no puzzle can ever be truly completed without all the pieces.

They're not working out sprained ankles and trying to get full range of motion back to an injured knee. Levine and her cohorts work only with patients with amputated limbs, teaching them how to build their strength in the right ways, making sure they relearn proper balancing techniques now that they have no legs, starting them out on low "stubbies" prosthetic legs, making sure their patients are prepared and able to move into their full size new legs. They learn to read their patients along the way, knowing when to press them harder and when to ease off a bit and give a bit of leeway. Levine shows us it's not only the physical injuries dealt with in the amputee clinic but the mental ones as well. Whether that's helping them move through the mental hurdles of a life with a prosthesis or understanding the needs of soldiers with brain injuries who need her to repeat each step each time and have the same conversation every single day - word for word - while his brain heals itself.

Levine touches on her personal life a bit here and there, covering moving from single life into a new relationship, her job affecting every aspect of her life, a forced week off when she decided to rehab her entire condo in a matter of days, and being unable to enjoy the sites of a real vacation because she was too busy cataloging injuries and prosthesis she saw. She never asks for accolades or pity, instead she lays all the cards on the table with a touch of humor and a lot of heart, much like the soldiers she helps treat.

At the end of the day, our work people - be it coworkers or regular customers or patients or or or... - become a weird little extended family. We often spend more time with coworkers than our immediate families. We learn habits, preferences, annoyances, weaknesses and strengths. We learn what jokes to make to break a bad mood and when the time is right for that joke. We learn watch shows they watched the night before and don't have to say anything more than "Did you watch it?" to kick off the morning round of conversations while we wait for the coffee to kick in. We have disagreements over nothing important and inside jokes over the silliest stuff. We grow relationships and can have an entire conversation with a single shared look and not a word spoken. We send flowers after lost loved ones, books after surgeries, and links to youtube videos just because. We learn when their silence is actually begging for a friend and when their silence is a wall that they're not ready to have you break down just yet. We become family with those people. Day in and day out. Side by side. Battle after battle.

This peek into their lives was a fascinating read and a great reminder that our battles, while tough, are so little compared to what some folks fight. But all those fights, big or small, are a little easier with family by your side. The folks at Walter Reed were no different. Physical therapist or patient. Military or civilian. Army or Marine. They became a family, lifting each other up - literally and metaphorically - when they fell down. And that's what family is supposed to do.

Preach it, Bobby Singer.

I received an advanced reader's copy from the publisher for review through Goodreads Giveaways.

Mbullard says

Run, Don't Walk is a autobiography by Adele Levine. She is a physical therapist and shares her story about working at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. She worked with wounded soldiers . They came to the center, had surgeries and often had long journeys towards recovery. She worked with amputated patients and helped them learn to walk. I liked this book because it teaches you to never give up and also to encourage others. Adele was finishing up physical therapy school and looking for a job. She got her first job at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. This center was an amputee rehabilitation center. Wounded soldiers were sent there where medical staff worked to save their lives and rehabilitate them. She only planned to work there one year. One year turned into eight years. The center became the world leader of amputee rehabilitation. This was a unique place to work because the patients and medical staff was on display. The rehab clinic was a glass gymnasium. Tour groups, politicians and celebrities would tour the facility. Levine had to learn to work in that environment and with patients with life changing injuries. She described her days as intense, chaotic and sometimes heartbreaking, but she and the patients were able to find humor and joy in their time together. After the center shut down she was relocated to another hospital.

I enjoyed reading about her experiences as a physical therapist at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. It inspired me to see how hard she worked to help her patients overcome terrible injuries that were going to affect them the rest of their lives. She pushed them to reach their goals. Her work was intense. She pushed the patients even when they wanted to give up. I liked learning how she was able to help others have a fulfilling life through her job. I can relate to this book because my dad is a physical therapist for the Department of Veteran Affairs and he shares stories with me about his patients who are veterans.

This book is a must read. I give it 4 stars. Adele Levine was a physical therapist whose patients were amputated soldiers. She shared how rewarding her job was even when she had to work long hour days that were full of chaos. She enjoyed seeing patients get well physically and find new hope for their lives. If you want to see how you can make a difference in others lives, this is a good book to read.

<http://media3.washingtonpost.com/wp-s...>

Nikhil says

The issue with the writing of most medical professionals is that it is often a self-aggrandizing chronicle of overcoming trials and tribulations. Adele Levine manages to avoid writing another jaded recollection of the trials undertaken. She doesn't talk about forging herself into a better physical therapist and all the lives that are better off for her. Instead, she provides a more raw set of stories, each providing snapshots of Walter Reed and the lives of the people there. While a little more cogitation alongside the stories wouldn't have gone amiss, there is much to be said about the lack of presumption on her part regarding how the others must have felt. Instead she just provides a narrative of actions and leaves it to the reader to consider why people acted as they did.

tone without going too far in depth with clinical aspects that would alienate a lot of readers. The stories themselves range from the seemingly mundane to profound events. It highlights not only the grander achievements and issues but the significance of the smaller day-to-day events that make up the healing process at Walter Reed. She is able to weave humor into a concept primarily focused on challenge and loss, showing the reader a more human and less dramatized side to the recovery process. Her telling of it doesn't take away from the gravity of the issues represented but instead provides a more whole picture of what is involved.

Levine has written a charming book that manages to successfully portray a human view of Walter Reed Physical Therapy and the people there. It has been an insightful and wonderful read.

I received a free copy of this book via a Goodreads giveaway.

Prince William Public Library System says

“Run, Don’t Walk” is Adele Levine’s memoir of her years as a physical therapist at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Humor and sadness are superbly blended into a realistic portrait of life in military trauma units. The book is filled with eccentric characters, patients and staff alike. Ms. Levine cared for the “wounded warriors” we have heard about since the onset of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of her patients had multiple amputations, at times as many as four limbs. That she has been able transform this sorrow into such a readable book is a testament to her humor and dedication to her patients.

- Bonnie S.

[Click here to find the book at the Prince William County Public Library System.](#)

Gwen says

Interesting book, but a bit broken up. I learned a lot about physical therapy and the military, and it was interesting to learn about it from a civilian perspective. However, the book was written in an almost vignette style that didn't flow well throughout the book. Still good, but not my favorite.

Abigail Cahen says

I was pretty disappointed in this book. Based on the description I anticipated a funny, insightful tale about the author's time at Walter Reed. There are small passages where the author is exceptionally funny or heart-wrenchingly insightful, but the remainder of the book is frankly a little boring. I had to push myself to get through many chapters, which rarely happens once I get into a book. Overall I feel like the book is disjointed and suffers from a lack of editing. It feels like a series of vignettes with a bunch of fluff added, and so probably would have been better written as a collection of short stories instead of as a novel.
