

# Search for identity and self-reliance

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



After reading the entire book and experiencing Aza's (our protagonist) life journey I as a reader, feel like the book tries to put an emphasis on Aza's mental health by describing her feelings when she realizes that she has no control over her fate, thoughts, and action. She always tries to use metaphors to explain her conditions (OCD and anxiety) to the other characters in the book. Throughout the book, we see that Aza always presses her thumbnail on the callus near the tip of her middle finger to continuously realize that she really exists and can feel pain. She believes that she cannot control her feelings and her thoughts because she feels like she is not a singular person, but instead, she is possessed with multiple identities which she acknowledges as demons. Ex: When she was having a conversation with Davis (Aza's boyfriend) and could do nothing but continuously sweat she says, " And if you can't pick what you do or think about, then maybe you aren't really real, you know? Maybe I'm just a lie that I'm whispering to myself" (Page 105). Whenever she feels anxious, lost, or uncomfortable in situations these demons talk to her and remind her to do things such as she needs to replace her Band-Aid, or she will contract *Clostridium difficile* from the filthy bacteria that is colonizing her body. An instance where she gives a metaphor about her life is when she tells Davis about this parasite called *Diplostomum pseudospathaceum*. This parasite matures in the eyes of fish, but it can reproduce only inside the stomach of a bird. So, when the parasite is ready to mate, the infected fish starts swimming to the surface of the water to get themselves eaten by a bird. The parasite ends up in the belly of the bird and breeds there, and the new-born parasites end up in the bird's feces, and eventually, inside the fish and the cycle continues. She is trying to

explain that she feels like the fish because her fate is being authored/controlled by the parasite instead of herself.

Over the course of the book Aza lacks self-reliance and fails to make the right decisions because her demons always make the decisions for her. Ex: When she was in the hospital after the car accident with Daisy, she has this debate with one of her demons on whether she should drink the hand sanitizer to stop her pain and stress about an infection. But like always, she could not control herself and drinks the hand sanitizer while in the presence of her mother. Aza is a massive germaphobe and due to this there are many unexpected and awkward moments between her and Davis. Ex: She freaks out after she kisses Davis and tells herself, “ His bacteria would be in me forever, eighty million of them, breeding and growing and joining my bacteria and producing God knows what” (Page 153). The thought that someone else’s bacteria can remain in your body forever and control who you are deep inside scares and haunts her for the duration of her relationship with Davis. I believe that Daisy is a foil to Aza because of the fictional character she creates called Ayala. This character is based on the personality of Aza, but when Aza finds about this character in Daisy’s fan-fiction she finds herself stuck to Ayala as if she’s a part of her overall identity. She hates this character but also realizes that she is really hating one of her own identities created by her best friend. In the end, we finally witness Aza overcome her identity-crisis as she becomes an adult. By writing the novel that involved all her identities she proves that she can manage her thoughts and rely on herself to live a normal life as well.

Overall, I really enjoyed the book because Aza's character really gives you an overview of someone who is suffering from these mental issues and how her surroundings impacts her life.