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One Hundred Names For Love: A Memoir

One Hundred Names for Love

A Memoir



Diane Ackerman

author of *The Zookeeper's Wife*

"This book . . . has renewed my faith in the redemptive power of love."
—Abraham Verghese, *New York Times Book Review*



Synopsis

Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize
Finalist for the National Book Circle Critics Award
"A testament to the power of creativity in language, life, and love." —Heller McAlpin, Washington Post
No other writer can blend the science of the brain with the love of language like Diane Ackerman. In this extraordinary memoir, she opens a window into the experience of wordlessness—the language paralysis called aphasia. In narrating the recovery of her husband, Paul West, from a stroke that reduced his vast vocabulary to a single syllable, she evokes the joy and mystery of the brain's ability to find and connect words. Deeply rewarding to readers of all kinds, Ackerman has given us a literary love story, accessible insight into the science and medicine of brain injury, and invaluable spiritual sustenance in the face of life's myriad physical sufferings.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One Hundred Names for Love is Diane Ackerman's brilliant and inspirational memoir of how she and her husband, the writer Paul West, coped with the stroke that left him - at age 75 - unable to walk, speak, or care for himself in any of the most basic ways. Devastating though it was, the crisis actually couldn't have happened to a better couple - two creative individuals for whom language is

nearly as essential as breathing. In addition to the standard treatment protocols, through much experimentation and faith in the brain's plasticity, Ackerman and West developed their own rehabilitation regimen as innovative and playful as it was exhausting. Four years into West's recovery, Ackerman invites a doctor unfamiliar with the case to comment on her husband's most recent brain scan. [The doctor] pointed out the damage from the past stroke, in the temporal and parietal lobes, a large dead patch in the frontal lobe, and missing bits elsewhere. "I'd assume this man has been in a vegetative state," he said with a soft humanity. On the contrary, Ackerman assures him. By "working the brain hard every day for four and a half years," her husband has not only regained his speech and mobility, but also has written several new books and published a variety of essays. The doctor shakes his head. "I'm so glad you told me this about him," he said thoughtfully. "It's important to know what's possible." Certainly possible for two immensely creative and determined human beings who have had the knowledge, will, means, and mutual devotion to take the healing process to its fullest potential. Creative medicine indeed. For which Ackerman and West deserve nothing but the highest regard.

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