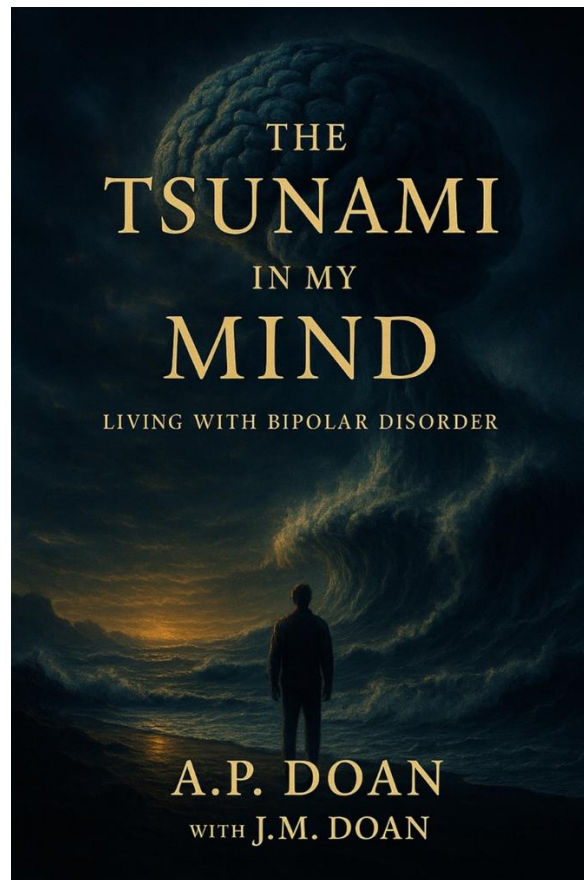


# My Forward for *The Tsunami in my Mind* by Andrew Doan, MD, PhD, MPH



## Foreword

*by Dr. Jeffrey Hansen, PhD*

I met Dr. Andy Doan in 2016, when he was serving overseas on Okinawa. At the time, he was scheduled to give a presentation at the Academy of Health Sciences at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, but could not get off the island. I was asked to speak in his stead. Honestly, I was intimidated. Andy was already legendary in our circles, an MD, PhD, and Johns Hopkins graduate with a stellar reputation, a pioneer in the study of internet and gaming addiction, and the author of a groundbreaking book I had already devoured. To stand in for him was no small thing.

That event marked the beginning of a rich friendship. Over the years, we came to know each other well, first through shared academic interests in addiction and trauma, and later through something deeper, the kind of connection forged in mutual honesty, shared faith, and walking together through suffering. We co-authored a book, *Digital Drugs*, recorded podcast episodes on his excellent YouTube channel, and engaged deeply in the clinical and spiritual challenges of helping people heal. But it was not until later that I came to know the fuller story, the backstory, of Andy's life.



**Forward for *The Tsunami in my Mind***  
**– Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.**

What I did not know then, but would come to learn, was that Andy had been privately struggling for years with the early stages of bipolar disorder. The genetics were there. The trauma was there. And eventually, the tsunami came ashore. When the full force of mania and collapse hit, Andy did what so many do not, he turned to faith, to his family, to his friends, and to treatment. He made courageous decisions in the midst of deep suffering.

As a clinician, I am cautious when it comes to medication. But in cases of severe bipolar disorder, lifelong medication is not just prudent, it is essential. Andy embraced that reality, not with resignation, but with wisdom. More importantly, he understood that medication alone is never enough. He went deep into therapy. He did the hard work, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. And through it all, I had the profound privilege of walking that path with him as a kind of therapeutic friend, a fellow traveler.

Andy Doan is the most resilient human being I have ever known. He gets knocked down, and he gets back up. He does not stay bitter. He does not wallow. He moves forward with grace and clarity. And he has taught me, someone who has practiced for decades, quite a bit about forgiveness, about letting go, and about healing.

This book is not just a chronicle of bipolar disorder. It is a profound narrative of redemption. It is about integrating trauma, understanding epigenetics and brain function, yes, but also about the grit of recovery, the anchoring power of faith, and the sacredness of relationships that endure. In many ways, Andy's journey parallels that of Kay Redfield Jamison in *An Unquiet Mind*. Jamison's book remains, in my view, the gold standard in describing the personal experience of living with bipolar disorder. But Andy adds something more. Where Jamison focused primarily on the depressive end of the illness, Andy explores in vivid and courageous detail the manic episodes that often wreak the most visible havoc. He captures their deceptive beauty, their intensity, and their terrible cost. He takes us into the fragmentation of relationships, the erosion of trust, and the collapse of his career and entrepreneurial endeavors. He does so with unparalleled honesty and clarity.

What follows in these pages is not just Andy's story, it is also a deeply personal roadmap through the terrain of bipolar disorder and the human heart. The early chapters take us into the origin of pain, a boy shaped by war, displacement, and generational trauma. The wounds were real, and they went deep. From there, we witness the creation of a brilliant mask, the ascent into success, and the foundation of a life built on intelligence, determination, and purpose. Andy became a physician and neuroscientist, but in the quiet hours, signs of unraveling had already begun. Sleep disruption, emotional volatility, and internal conflict were all there, quietly growing, quietly eroding.

The hypomania arrives first, cloaked in productivity and brilliance. It feels like success, like energy, like invincibility. Andy describes this stage with exceptional insight, capturing both its appeal and its dangers. And then, inevitably, the storm breaks. The full force of mania descends, and life begins to shatter. He loses control. Relationships rupture. The people closest to him suffer. The fall is hard, and the damage is real. But Andy does not gloss over any of it. He lets us see the cost, the hurt, the despair, and the regret.



**Forward for *The Tsunami in my Mind***  
**— Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.**

Yet the book does not end in brokenness. It is about rebuilding. We follow him as he begins the painful climb back, through deep humility, through broken relationships, through therapy and reflection and spiritual wrestling. Andy does not sugarcoat recovery. He brings us face to face with his own resistance to medication, his fear of losing identity, and the eventual wisdom that led him to embrace both therapy and pharmacological treatment. He speaks honestly and powerfully about the transformation that comes not just from managing symptoms, but from truly understanding the trauma at the root of the illness.

What makes this book so compelling is how Andy weaves his story with science. He is, after all, a neuroscientist, and he brings that depth to the page with clarity and grace. He explores how trauma reshapes the brain, how sleep deprivation alters cognition, and how epigenetic vulnerability expresses itself under stress. He connects the dots between childhood experiences and adult illness, not to assign blame, but to offer insight and understanding. This is not just a memoir. It is also a masterclass in clinical insight.

Equally important is the way Andy brings us into his marriage. He shows how bipolar disorder affects not just the individual, but the family. The toll it takes on intimacy, trust, and communication is staggering. And yet, what emerges from the wreckage is something even stronger. Julie, his wife, is a central figure in this story. Her love, her faith, her anger, her honesty, and her perseverance helped save Andy's life. Many partners would have walked away. She did not. She stayed. She prayed. She fought for him. She fought with him. And she never stopped believing that the man she married was still in there.

This is what grace looks like.

There is a breathtaking chapter on grace near the end of the book, one that I believe should be read and re-read by anyone walking through mental illness. Andy writes about grace not as an abstract theological idea, but as a living force that moved through his life when he was most lost. The grace of God, the grace of Julie, the grace of those who stood with him when he could barely stand on his own. It is in grace, indeed, that we are saved. And Andy Doan embodies that truth as a man who found peace not by avoiding his pain, but by facing it with courage and faith.

*Tsunami of the Mind* is a gift. It is a lifeline for those who suffer and a guide for those who walk beside them. It belongs in the hands of every clinician treating bipolar disorder. It belongs in the hearts of every spouse, sibling, parent, or friend trying to make sense of the chaos. And it belongs on the nightstand of every person who has ever asked, "Can I survive this?" The answer is yes. You can.

Andy did. And he has become something rare, something beautiful, not just a survivor, but a teacher. A witness. A friend. And my very best friend.

I could not be more proud.

—Dr. Jeffrey Hansen, PhD  
Clinical Psychologist

Author, *NeuroFaith™: The Intersection of Science and Faith in the Healing of Trauma and Addiction*