

# TAP DANCING ON EVEREST

*A Young Doctor's Unlikely Adventure*

Mimi Ziemann, M.D.

*Tap Dancing on Everest*, at once riveting and reflective, explores the risks we take to become our truest selves. Mimi Ziemann blazes an unexpected path from the daughter of immigrants raised in New York City to a 25-year-old medical student who becomes the doctor and only woman on a team attempting a new route on the remote East Face of Everest in Tibet. In an outrageous plan, the team embarks without the use of supplemental oxygen, Sherpa support, or chance for rescue. When three climbers disappear during their summit attempt, Ziemann reaches the knife edge of her limits, digging deeply to fight for the climbers lives and to find her voice.

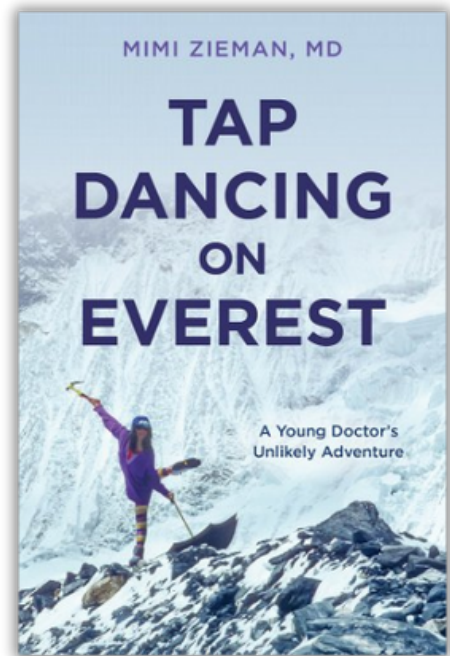
Weaving adventure and medicine in a feminist story of self-discovery, *Tap Dancing on Everest* captures the curiosity and awe of a young woman as she faces down childhood messages to stay small and safe and ventures into the unknown.

**“The best ascent of Everest in terms and style of pure adventure.”**  
— Reinhold Messner, first man to solo Everest

**“Gorgeous, so full of joy, zest, fun and yet with some profound thoughts. Once started you cannot put it down.”**  
— Sir Chris Bonington, author of *Everest the Hard Way*

**“An ideal alchemy of grit and grace. The lessons Ziemann learns on the mountain are important lessons for us all. A wild and deeply satisfying journey.”**  
— Emily Rapp Black, author of *The Still Point of The Turning World*

**MIMI ZIEMANN** is a physician, writer, and the author of *The Post-Roe Monologues* and *Managing Contraception*. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with her family. See more at [mimiziemannmd.com](http://mimiziemannmd.com).



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## About Author Mimi Zieman

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Mimi Zieman is an author, physician, speaker, and reproductive rights advocate. In addition to *Tap Dancing on Everest*, she has co-authored sixteen editions of *Managing Contraception*. Her recent play, *The Post-Roe Monologues*, has been performed in multiple cities and her writing has appeared in *The Sun Magazine*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Dorothy Parker's Ashes*, *NBC News THINK*, *The Forward*, and other publications. Prior OB/GYN roles include Director of Family Planning Emory University School of Medicine, Chief Medical Officer Planned Parenthood Southeast, and member of CDC committees writing guidelines for U.S. contraceptive care. Zieman has spoken nationally and internationally and has been interviewed by multiple media outlets. See more at [www.mimiziemanmd.com](http://www.mimiziemanmd.com).

## Q&A with Mimi Zieman

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***TAP DANCING ON EVEREST combines a coming-of-age story with an adventure, intersecting themes of feminism, medicine, and reverence for nature. Why is this book important now?***

The search for identity is a universal experience that's always meaningful—heightened during the coming-of-age years—but continuing throughout life. Specific themes significant now include elevating women's experiences, our relationship with the natural world, and the need for finding and using one's voice in a world of disinformation.

Conquering mountains has a male-dominated history, but I wanted to tell a different kind of expedition story—not about climbers—but about a woman in the shadows until the men's lives were at stake. Despite advances in opportunities, women are still often in the background, underestimate their capabilities, and have trouble being heard. Coming-of-age on Everest was a dramatic backdrop for discovering what I'm capable of and how I want to use my voice. My father's legacy as a Holocaust survivor and subsequently as an advocate for peace is a strong influence on my advocacy and an important part of the story.

One message I wanted to convey is that facing challenges that we're afraid of, or think we're not ready for, is difficult but results in growth. My "Everest," was assuming the role of team doctor while I was a 25-year-old medical student.

The book highlights the restorative power of immersion in nature and in solitude, both increasingly recognized as important in our over-stimulated world.

## Q&A with Mimi Zieman Cont'd

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***The body is an important theme in your book, if not even a character. Can you explain why?***

Our bodies contain who we are, yet we often don't know how to relate to them or listen to them. I write in the book that when I got out of my head and let my body lead, I felt more whole as a person and more joy. That happened while dancing and hiking. Part of the story is how I matured while learning to take care of the bodies of others. Since I'm a physician I wanted to normalize bodily functions by including details such as changing my tampons in thigh-deep snow and using a pee bottle.

***You write about how your parents arrived by ship in N.Y. harbor, your father being the only survivor of the Holocaust in his family, and its effect on you. Why was this important to you?***

All people carry family history that influences them, and the immigrant story is particularly resonant. I avoided the word "trauma", but made clear how my father's story haunted me, influenced me to seek my own path, and ultimately emboldened me. I wanted to tell the story of a physically strong Jewish woman because there aren't many Jewish adventure memoirs. My family's history of survival, displacement, and migration made me consider random opportunities as possibilities.

***You evoke distinct places vividly including growing up in New York City, The Catskills, Rocky Mountains, Israel, and the Himalayas. How does "place" influence you?***

Place affects our daily experience in deep ways. Traveling alone as a young person taught me to be more present and aware of my environment, which was revelatory. I aimed to capture those places the way they were then since many have changed now.

***How did you come to write The Post-Roe Monologues?***

Shortly after Roe v. Wade was overturned, I was inspired by the Vagina Monologues to use storytelling to promote empathy. It felt like the perfect confluence of my writing, advocacy, and career as a gynecologist specialized in Complex Family Planning. Previously, I'd testified at the Georgia legislature against bills restricting women's health rights, worked with community groups, and wrote Op-Eds. For the play, I also conducted interviews with people from the communities represented to ensure a diverse range of voices.

# Advance Praise for *Tap Dancing on Everest*

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“*Tap Dancing on Everest* is gorgeous. It is so full of joy, zest and fun and yet with some profound thoughts. Once started you cannot put it down. I hope it is a huge success—it certainly deserves to be.”

—**Sir Chris Bonington**, author of *Everest the Hard Way*, knighted for his services to mountaineering

“With a poetic vision that is staggering in its honesty and beauty, Mimi Zieman brings readers into the heart of a Himalayan ascent, guiding us along some of the unexpected pathways that intense adventures can trace in both body and mind.”

—**Katie Ives**, author of *Imaginary Peaks: The Riesenstein Hoax and Other Mountain Dreams*

“Mimi Zieman’s book is an ideal alchemy of grit and grace. The lessons Zieman learns on the mountain are important lessons for us all. A wild and deeply satisfying journey.”

—**Emily Rapp Black**, author of *The Still Point of The Turning World*

“Mimi Zieman is brave, tough, and impressive when on Everest, and lively, engaging, and funny when on the page. After returning from her climb she says she was ‘very grateful for ceilings.’ I myself am grateful for her vivid recounting of all her journeys.”

—**Meg Wolitzer**, author of *The Interestings*

“The story takes place on a frozen summit but is bound to melt your heart. The courage that drove her to this unlikely adventure permeates her candid recounting of her breathtaking tale.”

—**Etgar Keret**, author of *The Seven Good Years*

“The small band that formed the Everest ’88 team will be remembered as free spirits who went to the unknown and embraced the true spirit of adventure, a far cry from today’s narrative on Everest, and an essential addition to mountain literature. In *Tap Dancing on Everest*, expedition doctor Mimi Zieman brings to life the toll experienced by non-climbers on an expedition, what it was truly like not knowing if her teammates would return, and ultimately, what it took to heal their wounds. While recalling her tap-dancing days, this book is also a metaphor of a different kind of tap dance, that of survival on the roof of the world.”

—**Norbu Tenzing Norgay**, Vice President of the American Himalayan Foundation and son of Tenzing Norgay

“The best ascent of Everest in terms and style of pure adventure. “

—**Reinhold Messner**, the first man to solo Everest

# Advance Praise for Tap Dancing on Everest cont'd

“*Tap Dancing on Everest* is that rare book that manages to capture the adrenaline rush of a thrilling adventure and the gut-wrenching pathos of an epic tragedy. Mimi Zieman is telling a story that readers will be unable to put down—not just about life and death on the world’s most dangerous mountain, but about how we, as human beings, too often have to put ourselves in extreme danger to feel fully alive. I was utterly captured by this story. You will be, too.”

—**Steve Almond**, author of *All the Secrets of the World*

“[This] story touched me deeply.”

—**Dr. Tom Hornbein**, author of *Everest: The West Ridge*, and high-altitude medicine researcher

“What would lead a young female medical student from New York City who lived a life of shoulds and expectations to join an unaided climb up Everest as the team doctor? That young woman was Mimi Zieman and, in her memoir *Tap Dancing on Everest*, she unravels what brought her to that mountain years ago. In beautiful prose, Zieman brings us into her family’s Jewish immigrant roots, her city childhood, her dream to become a dancer, and how climbing and adventure helped her reconcile her past with the woman she became.”

—**Ann Hood**, author of *Comfort: A Journey Through Grief*

“From page one, *Tap Dancing on Everest* draws you into the heart-stopping world of mountaineering. An engaging narrative rich in details and vulnerability, the story captures the adventure in reaching beyond one’s comfort zone and into the unknown.”

—**Johanna Garton**, author of *Edge of the Map: The Mountain Life of Christine Boskoff*

“A captivating story, seldom told, about what it’s like to take care of Everest climbers from the perspective of a feisty expedition doctor. This page-turner is a must-read for real and armchair adventurers everywhere.”

—**Stephen Venables**, author of *Alone at the Summit* and first British man to summit Everest without oxygen

“By turns gripping and charming, tragic and joyful, Zieman’s rocky, ultimately revelatory journey shows how the true triumph of the summit is the discovery of her calling.”

—**Allison K Williams**, author of *Seven Drafts: Self-Edit Like a Pro from Blank Page to Book*

“Mimi Zieman’s compelling and very personal memoir recounts with warmth and insight how her father survived the holocaust, her challenging childhood, her courage and determination in the face of continued obstacles, and the passion and persistence that bring her to the roof of the world.”

—**Arlene Blum**, author of *Annapurna: A Woman’s Place*