

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS SERIES

STRUGGLE FOR INTIMACY



Janet Geringer Woititz, Ed.D.
author of the
#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

Struggle for Intimacy

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Janet Woititz, mother of the recovery movement, sensitively addresses the barriers of trust and intimacy that children learn in an alcoholic family. She provides suggestions for building loving relationships with friends, partners, and spouses.

Struggle for Intimacy Details

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Crystal Oros says

This book had almost every answer I have been looking for to help me push through becoming unstuck from my relationship pattern. Although this came too late in regards to my babys daddy, at least now I will be able to differentiate myself from his behaviour towards me and I now feel more confident in my journey towards self growth.

Sophia says

What am i doing right now? Eating packets of taco bell hot sauce until my mouth feels like its going to act like the southern states in the civil war and run away by secession for a little while or something... best simile ever, right guys? Cuz that like so totally shows that I know like a lot about American History now that im blonde and all.

BUT I DIGRESS.

(that was in no way a metaphor for this book only getting 3 stars... js... for shizzle i'm serious)

Parts of this made me really realize how very dysfunctional my childhood was... and in some very sick way it explained why all relationship attempts with people who had normal families were kind of a bust... so you know, my relationship only works when i date a guy for 3 years who is possibly just as screwed up as I am and who doesn't realize that he has the worst communication problems i've ever seen and some asoholic tendencies and the inability to empathize.

Don't get me wrong. I knew I had family problems. But I figured that having a shallow, self-centered, emotionally distant parent was just normal, and that going to McDonald's and not getting anything for your kid was what most people did. I also learned to depend on myself for things because once said parent gets home from working all day they will not want to move from the living room to fulfill promises (like going to the beach/pool/movies), get/buy/fix you food (regardless of how hungry you are and the fact that there is only koolaid in the fridge), or even do your laundry for school on Monday which requires so very little. I have, however, never looked at my "family" in terms of my father, who did have major substance abuse problems...

But part of why this book only gets a 3 is because it didn't really emotionally impact me that much. Ive gotten used to all this stuff, I don't expect my mother to jump up and suddenly buy me a car and send me to college or tell me I'm doing a good job and that she's proud or suddenly open up. The part about Disappointment is what really struck me the hardest because while I don't like to attribute all of my problems to my early childhood and feel that loyalty has absolutely nothing to do with my family circumstance personally... Disappointment played a big part in my life and I spent an inordinate amount of time trying to avoid it. I had absolutely no sense of entitlement and to this day I still have intense fears surrounding this issue. I do expect my boyfriend to be a mind-reader and before today I've never really considered it unfair. I still don't ask for gifts on my birthday and feel uncomfortable when people want to pay me too much attention. And i think my main battle for the last year (since I've been working in such a great place) has

been realizing that I'm worth a lot more than i give myself credit for. The story about the woman who wasn't going to say anything when the janitor turned the lights out- that's me. In fact, my birthday is coming up next month and since I know no one is going to do much more than Facebook me I decided to take matters into my own hands and i'm going to spend the day doing things that I enjoy, outside in the nice weather, I'm going to dress up and take photos and eat Japanese food at a nice restaurant and make a triple layer strawberry cake and go shopping and maybe rock climbing and it'll be the first good birthday Ive ever had. That sounds much better when you see the pictures that go with it in my head of this epic cake and perfect spring weather.

So my ultimate goal: realize that i'm a great person and stop blaming all bad things on myself because there is no way that i caused WW2 or columbine or Waco Texas or the gulf oil spill or any of my friends to smoke cannabis or for Rome to fall (even though i have good reason to believe these things). One step closer to achieving this.

Dee says

I wish this was longer. I do like that she has a section on same-sex relationships, but she talks about fear of homophobia as part of a COA's psyche, which doesn't really apply to most queers I know. She also has a section on being the partner of a COA and the characteristics of COAs, which are both helpful.

Olivia says

Highly recommend this book. Fast, easy read. Chock-full of great information for how to establish trust, intimacy and have a healthy adult relationship. Recommended for anyone who desires a healthy relationship; ACOA or not.

Allison says

While I did not grow up in an alcoholic household, there was plenty of dysfunction to go around. I found this little book much more enlightening than I expected I would. I read quite a few "self-help" books and frequently I'm thinking, "yeah, yeah, yeah. Blah, blah, blah." Well, for a change, I really feel like I've gained some insight, courtesy of this book.

I plowed right through it but I fully intend to re-read it several times before I return it to the library. Whether you are an ACOA (Adult Child of an Alcoholic) or not, if you really struggle in relationships, seriously consider giving this book a read. While it is primarily written with ACOAs in mind, if you can see beyond that and recognize that these issues arise for folks of all sorts of backgrounds, you can come away with some new insight.

There are so many factors at play when we are growing up that can infiltrate into our future relationships in ways we don't even recognize until they are subtly pointed out. A lot of the stuff Wotitiz talks about is stuff that folks who haven't been in counselling before or who aren't comfortable discussing such personal matters may have never thought about or considered before reading this book.

If nothing else, it can't hurt. It is my intention to encourage my children to read *Struggle for Intimacy* when they become adults because I have seen myself in both the parent and child roles presented here. And, through this separate insight, I hope that I may also become a better parent and give them better tools to work with in their own relationships in the future.

Ingrida says

This book was a natural transition from previously read "*Toxic Parents*", because as a default, families, where one of the parents or both are alcoholics, are dysfunctional and therefore the children who grew up in such homes experience various difficulties. So it was like delving a bit deeper into the dysfunctional family psychology, focusing solely on problems of Adult Children of Alcoholics. I've said it and I'll say it again, that I'm not a big fan of labeling people like this, but it's an approved concept and it was useful digging into the specifics of difficulties that ACAs encounter in close relationships due to their childhood experiences.

The author gives a lot of attention to the ambiguity, chaos and insecurity that are more often than not experienced by ACAs. She covers many fears of such people in a mythbusting way. The core idea is that they have such difficulties being in close relationships is that they have never seen a good example of how a normal relationship and family should function, so they make it up as they go putting very high expectations on their SOs and then getting disappointed at them and THEN believing that it was all their fault that they're so unloveable.

This book's written for both ACAs and their significant others and can help both of them get a fuller picture of what their beloved people might be going through while trying to build a new relationship. It can help lower the expectations and have a more critical look at some of the behaviours, encouraging empathy but also not letting one or another forget their needs. So, yeah, given the amount of families that encounter alcoholism problem here in Lithuania one way or another, there's a wide range of people that could benefit from this book. And, to be honest, not only them, any young couple could also find some tips on how to match their expectations here. 4/5, because it's not like it's lifechanging, but all in all really good.

James says

This is kind of a sequel to the author's title *Adult Children of Alcoholics*. In this one, she focuses specifically on the challenges faced in romantic relationships by adults who were brought up by alcoholics or adults whose parenting abilities were inadequate for other reasons. Again, she vividly shows the kinds of problems that come up, explains their roots, and guides the reader in changing the patterns. A very useful book.

Jenny Justice says

Another winner

It's double edged to feel thankful and relieved and comforted by this book, and angry that this is me, this is what just happened to my relationship, and angry that I didn't cause myself to be this way and it's so much painful work to deal with who and how I am everyday let alone in context...of relationships, of work, or anything. I feel like in am off to a good start now that I know I have a tribe and a name acoa, but i wish I had

known this and given my partner this book 14 years ago before it all went downhill so fast these past four years. I plan on having copies to spare in the future.

Akilah says

Much like Adult Children of Alcoholics, this book was helpful for me to see the patterns in my life and know that I'm not alone/crazy. While Woititz says what an ACOA should change, she doesn't really give strategies for how to do that. But, you know, there are other resources for that. Still, great read, really informative and thoughtful.

Paul says

You definitely don't have to grow up in an alcoholic family to experience the kind of insanity she describes. You can grow up with no idea what love or intimacy really are in many different family situations.

Margot Note says

"To be intimate, to be close, to be vulnerable, contradicts all the survival skills learned by Children of Alcoholics (COAs) when they were very young. Acquiring intimacy skills requires a complete relearning process and is, to say the least, a monumental task" (xiii).

Julie Coble says

Amazing how a book written 30 years ago can speak to me still. This is the third time I've read the book. It reminds me I still need to remember what makes ME who I am and how I've overcome much of the hurt from my youth. It is possible to find healing. :)

Isabella Roland says

I read this directly after her other book about Adult Children Of Alcoholics, so I cant help but compare the two. Of course this one is more focused on how you can have a healthy relationship as an adult. I found many of the problems to be present within my own life. When you never see a healthy relationship as a child, you have to guess at what it looks like as an adult. This book lays out some clear points you should realize about moving forward. Boundaries, talking through feelings, and not overreacting are so important. I think this book is a great tool to help you look at your behavior from a rational perspective. It was not a super captivating book and it's a short read, but if you are exploring relationships now as an ACOA it's really important to undo all the unhealthy behavior that your parents ingrained in you in order to live life as a functioning and happy adult.

Brandy says

Great book for those that have grown up in an alcoholic home (or highly dysfunctional home) or for those that are involved with an Adult Child of an Alcoholic. This book explains why Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA's) behave the way they do in relationships, why they choose the types of partners and relationships they do and why they struggle with finding a sense of "normalcy" in a relationship. Having grown up in an alcoholic home, I found this book extremely insightful - I recognized a lot of my own patterns. Definitely recommend.

Ed says

Not bad. It focuses on the relationship problems incurred by children of alcoholics. I am one, and understand the life-long struggle to be "normal". The information is accurate, but not all that new. My big take-away concerned my trust issues. This book was recommended to me, and the time is right for me to hear this.
