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The Jonathon Letters: One Family's Use Of Support As They Took In, And Fell In Love With, A Troubled Child



Synopsis

This book gathers together an exchange of letters over the first year of placement of a particularly troubled child suffering from attachment disorder. The correspondence is between Lori Thomas, the foster/adoptive mother, and Michael Trout, Director of The Infant-Parent Institute in Illinois.

Unbeknownst to the two parties, they were recording the story of the tortuously slow and unsteady opening up of the soul of a little boy. The Jonathon Letters was created in the hopes that these recorded experiences may help others who struggle to heal their child with attachment disorder. It is a tale of ups and downs, because that's how it is with children whose beginnings have been so tortured. But the reader begins to get a sense of the driving energy of this unique family, who somehow bounce back after every regression, and find ways to understand Jonathon's defiance and rage and to remain connected to their purpose - to help this child heal.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As someone who has read a lot about RAD (reactive attachment disorder), I found inspiration and hope in this account of one family's struggles and their connection to the therapist who encouraged them through the darkest days, helped them see hope in the midst of absolute chaos and put them in touch with the loving spirit hidden deep within one very scared, angry little boy. I loved this book but I want to be clear about its limitations as well as its strengths. Each chapter is very straightforward and written for "regular" people, not professionals or therapists (one chapter is titled "How We Got into This Situation"). It is an honest account from both the perspective of the parents

and the therapist. One chapter is devoted only to the therapist's viewpoint. It is not full of tips, ideas or all-purpose guidelines for dealing with RAD but is the very individualized experience of one family. For those who find reading somewhat of a chore, they may find this book MUCH easier and more accessible than others, since it is written in a series of short letters. It does not necessarily have to be read straight through, although I tend to think it is most beneficial if read from start to finish because that shows most clearly the transition from meeting Jonathon to dealing with him, being baffled by him, etc. A key chapter is the one in which the family decides to adopt Jonathon, noting that "there is a side of him that has a lot of love and sweetness and that side of him needs a chance to survive." It was far from an easy decision to make as Jonathon was a typical RAD child, with no definite signs of EVER being able to engage fully with this family- or any other. He had a history of past abuse and rejection and serious problems trusting anyone (understandably).

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