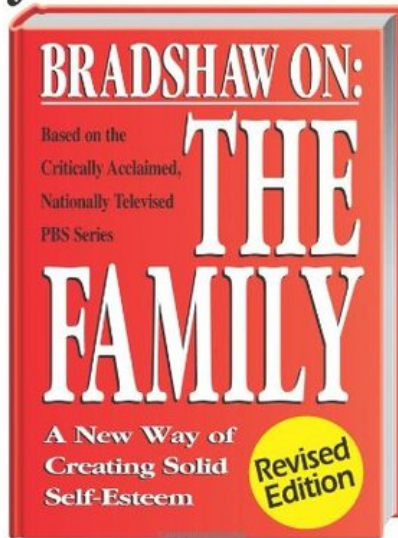


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**JOHN BRADSHAW**



## **Bradshaw on the Family: A New Way of Creating Solid Self-Esteem**

*John Bradshaw*

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# Bradshaw on the Family: A New Way of Creating Solid Self-Esteem

*John Bradshaw*

## **Bradshaw on the Family: A New Way of Creating Solid Self-Esteem** John Bradshaw

Based on the public television series of the same name, *Bradshaw On: The Family* is John Bradshaw's seminal work on the dynamics of families that has sold more than a million copies since its original publication in 1988. Within its pages, you will discover the cause of emotionally impaired families. You will learn how unhealthy rules of behavior are passed down from parents to children, and the destructive effect this process has on our society. Using the latest family research and recovery material in this new edition, Bradshaw also explores the individual in both a family and societal setting. He shows you ways to escape the tyranny of family-reinforced behavior traps--from addiction and co-dependency to loss of will and denial--and demonstrates how to make conscious choices that will transform your life and the lives of your loved ones. He helps you heal yourself and then, using what you have learned helps you heal your family.

Finally, Bradshaw extends this idea to our society: by returning yourself and your family to emotional health, you can heal the world in which you live. He helps you reenvision societal conflicts from the perspective of a global family, and shares with you the power of deep democracy: how the choices you make every day can affect--and improve--your world.

## **Bradshaw on the Family: A New Way of Creating Solid Self-Esteem Details**

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**John Bradshaw**

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# **From Reader Review Bradshaw on the Family: A New Way of Creating Solid Self-Esteem for online ebook**

## **Lesley says**

If you ever are curious what the definition and impact of a dysfunctional family is, this is your book. Bradshaw discusses the family as a system of relationships and explains how the unresolved issues of one generation get passed on to the next. I read this book in a class--Family Dynamics-- and when we reached the chapter on the "normal" family the professor asked how many of us recognized their own family. No one raised their hand! :)!

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## **Rebecca says**

Bradshaw is great for bringing to light the one thing that tends to stare us in the face and yet we just can't see it. Regardless of the fact that he tends to deal with more substance abuse, anyone who suffered emotional abuse as well will find a great deal of relief from reading this book.

Families are complex to begin with - add a little dysfunctionality and they get downright crazy. Bradshaw helps you see past the craziness and see how to heal yourself and move on.

Not full of big or ambiguous terms, it's easy to read and understand. Not all of it is useful, but most of it and those elements that are make it a very good tool in anyone's emotional recovery.

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## **Jiang Zhang says**

This book did give me a revolutionary discovery of myself and my family, thanks to my psychologist. It almost covers every aspect of a dysfunctional family. When I was reading it, I was shocked several times that how could a book know me that well. Some characters I used to think is mine but is actually a 'gift' of my family, not on my own. I bought another 2 books for my parents to read. Also several times I wanna share the thoughts in this book with my friends and family.

Till now I couldn't find any flaw of it. If I really want to say a little, maybe should be: the recovery steps are too abstract. I know that a lot of psychologists would say: go meditation, get in touch with the inner child, something like that. It's too difficult even to think about. And in my country there hardly runs any supportive recover group as the book described. The author said the first 12 steps took him 10 years to achieve, I don't know, I may have seek other way to get on the recovery progress, but not exactly as the author is suggesting.

I would like to read his book 'heal the shame that blinds you' later.

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## **Arthur "AJ" says**

This book in combination with Bradshaw on the Family (a 13 part Public Radio presentation) can cut

through much of the fog of growing up in a dysfunctional family. I watch the TV series about once every 5 years because I forget things from it.

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## **Daniel says**

Pop Psych, and boring at that

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## **Phong says**

The first part of the book where Bradshaw described the reasons and symptoms of a shame-based personality was informative and intriguing. I wish he would have spent more time on the solution (the 2nd half of the book). This book clearly illustrates American families' problems in the beginning of 21st century. For non-american readers like me, it would take a little more effort to digest the concepts of faith and deep democracy. Nevertheless, the author has a friendly, descriptive, easy-to-understand writing style. A good read for people who love Mr. Scott Peck's work (A Road Less Travel).

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## **CL says**

Do your self a gentle smart favor, ignore any negative review of this book. If you want to help yourself and help your friends and loved ones, summon whatever it takes for you to read this book.

I had a female friend who told me for years that she had a happy childhood, that she loved her parents. I kept silent, as if I believed her, because the first time I recommended she read something like this she got very defensive. Years pass, she divorces the husband her parents forced her to marry, because she was pregnant with another mans' child. (Kid you not.) The husband made her give up the her first baby for adoption. She was so dominated by her parents at that time, she did, against her hearts' desire. She divorced this husband, 12 years her senior because he verbally abused her in front of their two sons. He stopped making love to her. (She was attractive). Her self esteem (or self feeling) went downhill. She slept in the livingroom for 3 years, secretly, so her sons wouldn't know. Meanwhile sometimes late at night, she and the husband would scream and argue to the point -- I later learned from a neighbor -- that the sons would run out into the large yard, hold their hands over their ears and scream -- in order to not hear their parents yelling.

Every time I encouraged her to read this book or something like it, she claimed she had a happy childhood. Years and years later she called me and asked me to help her get a therapist, her life was falling apart. I researched on the web for a John Bradshaw trained therapist. She went and it saved her life. Meanwhile, before that, she divorced the abusive husband, went back into the workforce and eventually started drinking due to work stress, and became an alcoholic. She was arrested for a single car drunk driving accident, that landed her, knocked out by her head hitting the steering wheel in the hospital. She called her healthy friend, me, to pick her up, she was too ashamed to ask her oldest son, or any of her friends. She went to the therapist eventually, and learned to say "no" to her parents, and thought she was all better. Meanwhile she met the love of her life, and blossomed, traveled for the first time, had her first orgasm (she told me) and became a much happier person...except...when stress caused her to lean on the bottle. She leaned on the bottle more and more...to the point where I could no longer take her late night drunken raged filled phone calls.

You guessed it, her unhealed childhood wounds caused her to ruin her relationship with her soul mate / love of her life. She ruined her health, her liver and kidneys and was diagnosed as a paranoid. She started having an affair at work, which led to her and the man being fired and led from the building by security guards. She loved her job, ultimate shame in her exit.

I knew another woman, who was beaten by her father, with a bamboo switch, every week (along with her brothers) whether she (they) had mis-behaved that week or not. When she started to bloom as a young young woman, he started to molest her. When she had bloomed, he started raping her. When she first shared this with me, I offered her this book. She read this book, and Bradshaw's "Homecoming," about healing the inner child and the wounds of early life and such abuse, trauma and dysfunction. Within a few months she threw off the shackles of her old thinking and feelings and traveled around the world speaking at large conventions in her field, and being interviewed on television about her ground breaking work.

Imagine a line drawn down the middle of a white or chalk board. To the left of the line is everyone and everything that these books can help liberate and heal. To the right of the line are all the people with wounds that will take more work and therapy.

The first woman thought she knew better, likely, already paranoid and resistant to the suggestions of others due to her control father and mother. The second woman was just waiting to encounter information that could demonstrate for her that the beatings, molestations and rapes were not her fault. Of course the second woman would need and get more therapy, the book was the gateway.

The first woman refused the gateway offered by the universe, a friend. And her life got better for a while after divorcing, and then cycled into a downward spiral. It is said people live their lives in patterns, repeated patterns, and that change is hard due to neurological / emotional imprints, as well as linguistic imprints (values, opinions, positives or prejudices).

I tend to wonder if people live their lives in linear spirals, each time they repeat themselves, they can improve or regress, get worse. That's what I've seen in life.

John Bradshaw is the most educated, well researched educator and presenter of human psychology, and family systems psychology as evolved by Dr. Murray Bowen in the 1950's and 60's and through till his death in the 90's.

Imagine that you have a garden, and in it you plant two rows 6 feet apart, so that they will not share the same added nutrients and water. In the first row of corn you give it all organic matter nutrients and the suggested amount of water, without over watering. In the second row of corn, you give it polluted water, polluted "nutrients," water with batter acid, and you cover it with a tarp deny it sun, every other day.

Which row of corn would you personally fare to do better, and which would you want to eat?

This is the root premise of "how a nature is nurtured," yes, genetics and epigenetics, and epigenesis play a roll in our personality formation -- and the "baseline state of contentment or lack thereof, that we wake up with every morning."

So indeed, our personalities, and abilities for happiness, are influenced by both heritable aspects, and the conditions of the garden in which we grow up, both macroscopically (society, schools) and microscopically (the family unit, primary care givers, baby sitters, close family members like aunts, uncles, grandparents etc.)

Mostly, unhappy people are made, conditioned, not born. Yes some are born with a screw loose.

What you resist, in getting to the bottom of your early life conditioning -- and as a famous artist once said "I found childhood particularly difficult, it made me very sensitive, it wasn't anything my family did, my parents are wonderful, it was the society, the kids around me etc." And another brilliant artist said "It is very difficult to be both highly intelligent and highly emotional (from an abusive childhood), one uses the intelligence to navigate the emotions, but eventually, without education, therapy and the learning of self regulation techniques like meditations for down regulating negative emotions, and skills for navigating social life, conflict resolution, conscious honesty, kindness and gentleness to others...there are many pot holes and troubles one can fall into in life."

My beliefs can be discerned by the above. The people I have met who had adverse childhoods, that have done the best, are the ones who for some reason are either desperate, or able to be intelligent enough to embrace the information such as this book and others about early life development, and then find and learn the skills to navigate and act successfully as an adult.

Mostly, this never happens because the information gets shamed by those like the first women, who would deride the concept / metaphor of the "inner child," because she'd heard comedians do it on TV. And yet, her life fell apart.

The average human understands more about how a dog, a cat, or their car works, then how THEY work. This is a tragedy for a biomass / species known as "Human Beings." We are Human Animals, and "self aware Hominids," we exist emotionally, before we learn language and have thoughts. And what this book is pointing out and educating people to is that how that little neonate is treated (we now have evidence that a fetus can feel his mother's experience/feelings at age 6 months in the womb, so the imprints start then) will absolutely have an effect on personality development, ability for contentment in life, core values, and the emotional baseline state of the human as they come of age.

I never met a school bully, murderer, or violent criminal, alcoholic, or drug addict that came from a truly healthy family.

Sometimes it takes a very deep look to figure out how someone was influenced to go off the rails in life. The most interesting case I encountered was a guy whose parents seemed kind, polite, warm hearted, charming, well humored... And yet he turned out ruining a pro sports career, a professional modeling career, and became a heroin, cocaine, alcohol addict, and died of a heart attack from damage to his heart from mixing cocaine and heroin too many times. He had "died" and been revived 3 times in his life. The 4th time, it got him in his sleep.

He was my dearest best friend and I learned all of the above to try and save his life. By the time he agreed to get clean, he'd already lost the ability to walk, and had a plastic plate in his head from being beaten for an unpaid drug debt.

People who dismiss the important information in this book, after reading Ten Pages etc., are a sad joke. Yes, there are still light witted folk who want to attack the idea that we are influenced by our parents and siblings and that we are born with a fully formed personality and emotional traits etc. etc. etc. They do you or themselves no service.

Bradshaw has owned that his southern accent, and his passion seems angry sometimes when he presented on TV, and he has apologized for that, that part of his conditioning, and urged those who or whose family

members need help or recovery...to embrace the information whether it is from his work, or another author on the same topics / theory.

To wit, there is a Renaissance of new authors, books and information on family systems theory and therapeutic practice in the non-USA Anglosphere. Dr. Oliver James does a great job in "How To Survive a Family Life," including intelligently debunking "the Twins" studies and theories. He's a brilliant man, a clinical child psychologist and son of both a psychologist and psychiatrist who wanted to get to the bottom of how they "screwed up" he and his sister. (He and his sister had joked about it, and he decided to find out by become a Child Psychologist. There's also a great new book out of Australia, or NZ, I forget the name and the author at this point.

There are hundreds of branches of psychology, which is a field that was born out of the field of philosophy. If there there is a Logical place to begin researching understanding and changing one's self, it has to be studying the garden from which we were spawned.

This book and the companion PBS TV series were massive successes for a reason. They spoke to answers Tens of Millions of people were seeking, and they have Saved Lives, probably thousands of lives. I have used them to save 6 lives myself, and used them to save 3 marriages with children as well.

Sadly, if you cannot get into this book, or these ideas and theories, and understand them...it says more about your level of intellectual development than the work itself does.

Humans are evolutionary creatures, we'll always be able to ding and quibble over any theories or posited ideas or researched "facts" about human conditioning, development and personality / expression.

If ever there were a logical place to start to understand how we turned out they way we have...it would be the family unit, where we spent the most time being cared for or not, loved or not, where we received the majority of our early life treatment from others, and spent most of our time. Certain school is a big factor when we reach school age.

Studies on human resilience also point to treatment by the mother, bonding/attachment, and available nutrition and education / 1st world / 3rd world, etc., other external factors.

I hope this review helps people.

GL

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### **Cynthia says**

This book helped me a lot. If you want to end the toxic patterns in your life (codependency, substance abuse etc.), this is a great book to read. Our behaviors have a lot to do with our inner child whose needs weren't met.

Bradshaw on The Family really allowed me to separate myself from my toxic childhood upbringing and the toxic religious upbringings that I've had.

I am now on a journey to finding my true self and slowly cutting off the false self I've created.

This is also a great book for parenting.

I read Healing The Shame that binds you and found that Bradshaw on The Family is an easier read. There's not as much psychology terms, much easier for an end user.

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### **Joey says**

"no one actually knew whether Hugh was male or female and it didn't really matter." (xxi)

"Hugh did forget and went to his death never knowing who he was." (xxii)

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### **Danielle says**

This book has some good ideas and insights, and I definitely learned something from it. But it is so poorly written and organized, and after a while the end-of-chapter summaries made me want to vomit. Bradshaw also comes across as both hokey and arrogant. I'm glad I read it, but as I was reading it I thought, "there must be something better written on this subject." If I find that something, I'll post it.

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### **Susannah says**

I recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand themselves and their families better. There were sections of the book where I felt like the author must have been sitting in my parents living room, watching the way we interacted, and then he wrote it into his book. It was very accurate, very enlightening, and I think even inspired. Reading this book was a very healing experience. I highly recommend it.



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## Kevin says

I only read maybe 10 pages of this book and skimmed other parts, so you can factor that into how you read this review. The basic premise of the book is that many events in our childhood and development cause shame, which caused a variety of problematic destructive events in later life. I don't necessarily take issue with that premise, but the way the author presents his case leaves much to be desired. His tack is extremely alarmist and he does not site specific facts but rather will reference other authors premises as opposed to referencing their research. His sweeping hypotheses seem overly simplistic and matter of fact, again with no research to back up his claims. Overall I think it will fail to satisfy readers with a critical mind.

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## Cara says

The first few chapters of this book were kind of boring--basically the background of this guy's theory and talking about what a healthy family would look like. But now I've gotten to the chapter on compulsive families, and I'm surprised (even after having been surprised about this same thing before) at how extensively this stuff describes me. The author made a horrible acrostic from the letters of "Adult children of alcoholics," and almost every single trait applies to me, or did apply to me until I worked really hard in therapy to change it. Gah!

p. 90

"Addictive/compulsive behavior or marry addicts  
Delusional thinking and denial about family of origin  
Unmercifully judgmental of self or others  
Lack good boundaries  
Tolerate inappropriate behavior

Constantly seek approval  
Have difficulty with intimate relationships  
Incur guilt when standing up for self  
Lie when it would be just as easy to tell the truth  
Disabled will  
Reactive rather than creative  
Extremely loyal to a fault  
Numbed out

Overreact to changes over which they have no control  
Feel different from other people

Anxious and hypervigilant  
Low self-worth and internalized shame  
Confuse love and pity  
Overly rigid and serious, or just the opposite  
Have difficulty finishing projects  
Overly dependent and terrified of abandonment

Live life as a victim or offender  
Intimidated by anger and personal criticism, or overly independent  
Control madness--have an excessive need to control  
Super-responsible or super-irresponsible"

Or, perhaps more compellingly, "I thought that my addiction to excitement, my people-pleasing and approval-seeking, my overly developed sense of responsibility, my intimacy problems, my frantic compulsive lifestyle, my severe self-criticalness, my frozen feelings, my incessant good-guy act and my intense need to control were just personality quirks. I never dreamed that they were characteristics common to adults who as children lived in alcoholic families." (p.98)

Since nobody in my immediate family drinks regularly, I would be really confused right now if I hadn't already read a good bit about codependency.

So, on to codependency.

p. 185

"As the definition of addiction was expanded to include the wider range of addictions (activities, feelings, thoughts), the awareness dawned on observers that *any type of dysfunctional family exhibits the same co-dependent structure.*" (emphasis the author's)

It's like Tolstoy said: all happy families are alike, but each unhappy family is codependent. Or something like that.

I was going to type out the acrostic for this, too, but fuck it. The only thing I found particularly "aha!"ish here is the idea that trying to figure out what normal people would do, and then doing that, is part of all this codependent/adult children of X scene. Hm.

I was mostly looking forward to the last part of the book, which is about how to get better, but I was immensely disappointed that the solution was basically: join a 12-step program, get therapy, join a group of some sort, and get a spiritual life. I might be more impressed with the author's recommendations if this whole section didn't seem so "this worked for me! Therefore, it's what you need, too!" Just not finding that particularly persuasive.

Oddly enough, the description of how you'll be at the end of the third stage of recovery seems to fit me pretty well, but if you look at the descriptions of the outcomes of the first two stages, I'm all messed up.

I really don't know what to think about this book. If my therapist hadn't recommended it, I'd cheerfully cast it aside and disregard it, but since he thought I'd get a lot out of it, now I'm like, "uh oh, am I just in denial here? Do I really need a 12-step program or some shit?" ???

Either way, I really did not enjoy reading this book, and I'm very glad to be done with it. I kept waiting for some new (or at least new-to-me) insight, but other than the WWND? thing, there really wasn't. I guess I know more about this stuff than I realize. I did do a good bit of reading on codependency last year, and I read a bunch on addiction for a client project.

There is a big exercise that starts on p. 199: "12 essential traits of co-dependency that lead to powerlessness and unmanageability"--you're supposed to go through the list and write down examples of how you've exhibited each trait (if applicable) and what it cost you. Probably a good exercise, but it sounds so hideous.

Another book I'm reading right now offers contradictory advice that basically boils down to "acknowledge and move on, dude"--think I'll do that instead.

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## **Mark says**

When I read Bradshaw On: The Family, it was an energetic insight into many of the situations that I had encountered in my family of origin, and again in my marriage. I read it at the beginning of a long stretch of personal growth spurred on by divorce at the time.

It served me well by giving me another context from which to view many situations in my relationships, particularly in understanding situations that seemed randomly disruptive or disconcerting. Bradshaw's systematic description of what he calls "the poisonous pedagogy" found in some dysfunctional families allowed me to survey my own experiences thoroughly and find where I could make choices differently as I moved through an interesting divorce.

I chose specifically to include this book, however, more for the response and experiences I've witnessed when my friends have borrowed it. Consistently, my friends have borrowed copies, only to ask if they may keep them for a little longer, and a little longer, until I ultimately wish them well with their new book and happily buy another copy. The book was originally published in 1984, and hasn't changed much in its content over several editions, only in its emphasis. It seems to have the appeal of a classic in that people return to it over and over again, even when they have found more contemporary works that go into greater depth on the subject of family dynamics.

I recommend this book to anyone who is puzzling through parts of their life where they find recurring themes of nonsensical behavior or frustration.

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## **carl theaker says**

I found this book a great help. Bradshaw is big on the inner child kind of thing. Even if you don't agree with his self help methods, I think most would find the reading insightful.

The center of what I liked is- identify the problem, figure out what caused it, that clown at your 5th bday party perhaps? but don't use that as an excuse! You figured out what makes you tick, now use it get on with your life.

Went to hear him speak once (and I'm not a person who would be caught at a self-help seminar) and boy he was a congenial & charismatic host.

