



What to Do When a Parent's Love Rules Your Life

Dr. Patricia Love
with Jo Robinson

The Emotional Incest Syndrome: What to do When a Parent's Love Rules Your Life

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From Dr. Patricia Love, a ground-breaking work that identifies, explores and treats the harmful effects that emotionally and psychologically invasive parents have on their children, and provides a program for overcoming the chronic problems that can result.

The Emotional Incest Syndrome: What to do When a Parent's Love Rules Your Life Details

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Author : Patricia Love , Jo Robinson

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From Reader Review The Emotional Incest Syndrome: What to do When a Parent's Love Rules Your Life for online ebook

Miguel says

Great read and extremely informative. I'd go as far as saying it should be required reading for any parent to be. How to identify and prevent emotional incest. Why it happens and what you can do to stop it if you're doing it to your own kids

Tonya says

Helped me understand my childhood and avoid what I had experienced when I became a parent.

Lindsay Nixon says

UPDATE: THIS IS, BY FAR, THE BEST "SELF-HELP" BOOK I'VE EVER READ.

DON'T BE PUT OFF BY THE TITLE.

Yes, this book deals mostly with enmeshed families (lack of boundaries and other dysfunction) but Chapter 14 on how to resolve conflicts is OUTSTANDING. I have yet to come across something so succinct, smart, and actionable. You will improve your life if you can adopt this simple communication formula with issues arise. Chapter 7 (?) that describes a healthy family or a healthy marriage, is also very helpful for anyone to read. I listened to both chapters several times and took notes. I'll read this book again and again and again.

ORIGINAL REVIEW:

I was just (very very recently) introduced to the topics/concepts of “overt vs covert sexual abuse” and “emotional incest” by a friend. After browsing an article on psychology today (by this author) I picked up this book for further education. It’s the only book I’ve read on the topic, so I have nothing to compare it to, but found the book provides a great deal of clarity, education, and recovery tools on this not-discussed-but-should-be issue.

I especially appreciated the numerous “real world” examples as now I better understand my friend’s situation. This is likely a slam dunk for you or not—it applies or it doesn’t.

If there was a favorite child in your family, if you were the golden child, if your parents divorced, if you were an only child, if you were “spoiled” with lots of attention (good or not—favorably or harsh/critical), if a parent leaned on you or tried to be/is/was your “best friend”, if you had an enmeshed parent or helicopter parent (or you are one) this is a good book to check out.

Flavia says

Excellent book. The title repelled and disgusted me but the insides are very informative and relevant. Now I am finally conscious of the fact that my both parents had no boundaries. My family was an absolute fiasco and it took me almost 9 years to recover emotionally. I had depression and constant high anxiety. Now I'm finally functioning well. This book gave me a profound realization and helped me to cut the cord from my parents for good. Finally I am free to be an adult person.

Stephanie says

So far, amazing. It covers healthy relationships, family dynamics, different types of issues and so far is not only informative but corrective. I highly recommend to anyone who was raised with alcoholics, addictions of any kind, divorce, or a single parent.

Katharine says

Still reading. This books freaks me out in a good way.

Krissy says

Emotional Incest is something not many people have heard of. It's when a parent/guardian uses a child to fulfill their emotional needs. Something they should be seeking other adults for. Example: the parent that tells their child every aspect of their day in detail. Or the parent that complains about their problems to their kid. Even the parent that bad mouths their spouse to their kid. The parent in turn is not likely to give the same attention back to the child. It's all about them. Sometimes they have a best-friends type relationship, or like a spouse with the level of emotional intimacy. The single parent only child dynamic is often prone to emotional incest; however any family can have it. Often once the child grows up they can't think of any complaints regarding their childhood, but something seems off. It has the possibility of affecting their whole life- especially relationships.

For me the main point of this book was to put a name to the lifestyle in which I grew up. While unsettling that so many childhoods are robbed by selfish or uninformed parents, I found it comforting that I was not alone.

I found the first part of the book, especially the descriptions of emotional incest, to be very well done. The second part (the self-help portion) was not as good. I think my main problem is the author doesn't address the possibility of a "Cut-Off" with the parents. She does mention many parents that abuse their kids in this manor also have drug or alcohol addictions. Also she points out if your parent won't listen to you then you shouldn't confront them on your childhood. Which is a good point- don't beat your head against a brick wall. But it would be logical to follow up by mentioning- "hey, you don't have to still see or talk to these people just because they are family. If they are treating you like shi* the drop the rope and be done". Which I guess is my philosophy in a nutshell.

I will definitely re-read this book in the future. I just will skip the second part. I recommend "Toxic Parents" or "Children of the Self Absorbed" in its place.

Pénélope Lola says

Groundbreaking.

Evi L says

I find this book very insightful. It gave me a more clear picture of several of the dysfunctions in my family and childhood. It made me realize that the concept of family in the society I grew up, leads to paralyzed and insecure adults. And it gave me food for thought and some guidance for when I decide to make a family.

Nori says

I've learned that being my mother's best friend and confidante did a lot of damage to me that I didn't understand until now. Things I do and ways I react can be traced back to "Emotional Incest" between her and myself.

Amy Greenblatt says

I started reading this book to help me get advice on how to care for my eighty-two year old mother in a way that was compassionate and would give me a better perspective what a normal parent and child relationship should look like. When my father died four years ago and during three years preceding that, Mom began to rely on me more for doing chores and keeping her company which my father used to do. I was feeling a lot of strain about this not only because I work full time and was not getting enough R&R but I was also feeling pain when our personalities interacted in a way I didn't enjoy. Even though we do love each other very much, there were personality conflicts. I didn't know my limits to what I could do until I exceeded them.

I needed to find out if my desire to be a good person and meet the expectations of a strong, assertive parent was costing me too much. I don't have a family of my own, and there are no other relatives who can share the caring experience or be more of a family priority to me. Therefore, I just do the best I can and negotiate time off for my own life, all the while thinking how can I make sure she gets what she needs and still protect myself?

Often I think novels and great biographies give better perspectives on some issues than do self help books. Elder care is going to be more of a wider issue as the next couple decades progress. My parents were 37 when I was born, so I'm dealing with it earlier in life than some others. My only brother died at age 36, sixteen years ago. Sometimes I wonder if it would be easier if there were siblings to share this with; friends tell me "not necessarily". Though helping an aging parent isn't the focus of this book, it does say some things

about how a young adult can set boundaries and break free from a parent who was too close, how to reconcile with siblings, and be a better spouse and parent himself.

Kyna says

GREAT for anyone who needs to discover their family's dysfunction! If you feel like your parent's love, or their life, runs yours...this book is for you. However, the first half is better than the second half.

Crystal Oros says

This book made me cry several times over and often at unexpected sections in the book. I have no words to describe how this book opened my mind & helped me find answers to questions I'd been asking almost all my life and also helping me to love & forgive my family.

Norman says

A book with many helpful tips on how to bring a person back to center after being enmeshed (had an emotionally attached adult that dumped their needs and wants onto a child instead of another adult) with a parent. Helpful exercises on how to accept your parents, work things out with siblings and spouses, and come to terms with what happened then and now. Will definitely need to read again.

Kelley says

Boy, this book brought a new level to my understanding, healing, and growth. Although the syndrome has a hard-to-swallow name--one that makes you go, EW!--, what is happening is definitely emotional incest: a parent has become WAY too emotionally involved with you, FAR surpassing normal parent/child bonds, and has no right to be doing that. I now have one more piece to my puzzle (and, as it turns out, my mom's).

Unlike other reviewers, I found the second half of the book to be as eye-opening as the first half. I would not use every strategy proposed, but I can see how several would be helpful. I really liked the chapter on the parent taking responsibility and making amends to the child. Although I doubt I'll ever experience that, each and every suggestion is something I would like to hear.

I liked this book so much that I bought it. I will reread, highlight, and employ some of the strategies given.

I recommend this to anyone who struggles with a parent having too much importance in his/her adult life. To anyone who's been a parent's caretaker. To anyone who struggles with commitment. Get past the difficult title and read this book!
