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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

"...anyone trying to parent a child with Reactive Attachment Disorder would find this book encouraging....It would give them hope..." -- Brenda Krause Eheart, PhD, Founder, Generations of Hope, review reprinted in The Jonathon Letters "A must read for professionals & parents, offering hope, encouragement; key principles that are important in parenting a troubled child." -- Kelduyn R Garland, PhD, LCSW, LMT "This journal...is real, full of meaning, emotion, hope, fear and doubt....gives parents a feeling of not being alone..." -- Daniel Hughes, PhD, author, Building the Bonds of Attachment: Awakening Love in Deeply Troubled Children, review reprinted from The

Jonathon Letters"...anyone trying to parent a child with Reactive Attachment Disorder would find this book encouraging....It would give them hope..." --Brenda Krause Eheart, Ph.D."This journal...is real, full of meaning, emotion, hope, fear and doubt....gives parents a feeling of not being alone..."

--Daniel Hughes, Ph.D....very emotionally damaged child... parents need to go on believing that their child has a good inner self... -- Phyllis B. Rubin, CCC-SLP, PsyD, Clinical Psychologist, Speech-Language Pathologist, Certified Theraplay Therapist, author; “Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy in Practice”This is a wonderful and delightful book that captures the struggles and successes of one family's journey to help a troubled child that leads to their adopting him. The book consists of a series of letters between the mother of Jonathan, Lori, and a sensitive, thoughtful, and astute professional, Michael, who provides support, ideas, and information to her. Michael is helpful to Lori by providing support and knowledge, without becoming the family's therapist; they already have one. For example, when Lori writes a letter about Jonathan's crazy lies, Michael responds with the very helpful perspective that the child may actually have problems with cause-effect thinking so that, "But the very ridiculousness of it does raise the specter that the child honestly doesn't see things the way the rest of us do", (pg.67). It is this ability to reframe behaviors in a way that helps Lori to feel differently and then act differently that is so valuable about Michael's support. This book will be of value to both parents and professionals. It is touching, moving, and inspirational. As a professional, the book highlights how therapeutic and important it is to provide support for families. The book can serve as a model for how professionals can help families even when (or especially when) the professional is not providing psychotherapy. Professionals will find a wealth of useful information and material to use with families. Families will find a wealth of information and material to help them in their journey. In our practice we are now routinely giving this book to families. The feedback we have gotten is uniformly positive, with families reporting that they don't feel so alone; they feel empowered. --Arthur Becker-Weidman, Ph.D."This journal...is real, full of meaning, emotion, hope, fear and doubt....gives parents a feeling of not being alone..." --Daniel Hughes, Ph.D."...anyone trying to parent a child with Reactive Attachment Disorder would find this book encouraging....It would give them hope..." --Brenda Krause Eheart, Ph.D.

Michael Trout has been working clinically with foster children, with all members of the adoption triad, and with both adults and children who experienced early disruptions in attachment, for three decades. He is the Director of The Infant-Parent Institute in Illinois, and is a father, stepfather, and grandpa. Lori Thomas is the mother of six children (three of whom are adopted), and a foster parent. She is the President and Founder of Hope Village, Inc., and an advocate and public speaker

on children's issues. She lives with her husband, children and two dogs in northern Virginia.

Read it if you want to learn about compassionate parenting and thoughtful therapy. Very inspiring and a great way to learn how to better parent kids with a harder path through life.

I just can't recommend this book highly enough for both parents and professionals working in the field of foster care and adoption. Michael Trout's intelligent, thoughtful and sensitive responses to this foster/adoptive mother's experiences are such an inspiration to read. I have repeatedly had both parents and professionals tell me that they could not put this book down! It is destined to become a classic among those who are making the courageous commitment to parent a deeply wounded child.

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). My heart went out to him even as I wondered if he'd be able to find the resilience to bond with his new family. Those in the midst of their own struggles with an RAD child may find some solace and hope here. I want to reiterate that it is NOT a guidebook or "how to" manual for dealing with RAD. Rather,

it is one family's story but within that story are the seeds of inspiration, allowing readers to feel that they are not alone in their own struggles. Along the way, there are some suggestions that might be useful to other parents, especially when it comes to handing out consequences but these are interspersed with anecdotes and daily accounts. The tips are NOT the heart of this book. It was extremely fascinating to see how the therapeutic process helped smooth the transition from foster parenting to full adoption of Jonathon. Without the skilled intervention of this particular therapist, I'm not sure if the adoption would have worked.

I work with families who are struggling to find hope and healing for their children who have attachment issues. The Jonathon Letters provides a rich and meaningful story of the hopes, fears, struggles and triumphs of one family in their journey. I have already begun strongly recommending this book to the families with whom I work and have added it to my list of required reading for both the staff members and parents with whom I work. This book provides a wonderfully honest and realistic insight into the hopes and fears so many families face.

With over 17 years of experience working with severely traumatized children in a residential treatment setting, this is one of the most helpful and enlightening books I have come across. It challenged me to look at the children and adolescents I work with in a different light and gave me new and innovative ideas to be able to work much more effectively with our children. The suggestions that Michael gave Lorie were strategies that I have used repeatedly and found effective.

The book brazenly presents coercive restraint (aka Holding Therapy, Rage Reduction, Attachment Therapy, Cuddletime, etc.) as effective therapy, when it is specifically outlawed in most states and is considered unethical by all mental health professional organizations. This book glorifies the sort of brutal treatment of children that child protective workers are meant to investigate and stop. I was blown away that the authors put, at the top of their recommended resources list, a 1995 CBS story "Afraid of Our Children" (48 Hours) where children are literally tortured. See for yourself from this clip:[...]No surprise that all of the other wacky Attachment Therapy beliefs about Reactive Attachment Disorder and child development are also found in these pages.

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