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By the age of twenty, Joey has OD'd, attempted suicide, quit college, survived a near-fatal car accident, done time behind bars, and been kicked out of rehab. Now manipulative and hateful, the once sweet and charming Joey is long gone.

Written from the place where love and addiction meet, this is the poignant story of a defiant addict and the mother who won't give up on him. She finally realizes that it hurts more to hang on than to let go, and that letting go is not the same thing as giving up.

Sandra Swenson beautifully orchestrates a mother's lessons of love and loss, while surviving her son's addiction. Despairing parents of addicts will find comfort in this stark, yet hopeful tale.

The Joey Song: A Mother's Story of Her Son's Addiction Details

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From Reader Review The Joey Song: A Mother's Story of Her Son's Addiction for online ebook

Patty says

For those who don't understand addiction and how it affects a family, this is a great read. Particularly good at showing how sometimes good boundaries from your addict can be perceived by family and friends as not caring or a lack of love. Swenson put into words exactly how I feel about the struggles I have faced with my daughter. Thanks for that and thanks for the recommendation Dee.

Beryl says

For those of us who've wrestled with the anguish of loving a child bent on self-destruction, this mother's story is a "must read." Sandra Swenson's oldest son, Joey, is such a child. Like many of us, Sandra missed the signs of addiction in her young son. She attributed his loss of interest in school, his growing hostility, volatile anger, and hateful behavior to teenage angst. Like most of us, she struggled to help her son deal with what she believed were simply behavioral and emotional issues without realizing that beneath Joey's behavior lurked the twin monsters of alcohol and drugs. Even when Joey's actions strained the family's emotional stability and drained their resources, Sandra kept trying to help her son. She stuck with him as he crashed cars, OD'd, and attempted suicide. For years, she believed that with the right placement and understanding, Joey would rise from his self-imposed hell. It took years for Sandra to realize that she could not save her son. That loving him meant letting go. She concludes the book without knowing what lies ahead for her son. This is not a happy story, but it carries a powerful message. While our children might move into a place where we can no longer follow, we must not blame ourselves for our failure to save them. Our children, much as they might blame us, must assume responsibility for their choices. Their lives depend on it.

Kathleen Pooler says

Joey's Song is a heart wrenching and raw glimpse into the life of a mother whose teenage son is in the grips of drug addiction. With unflinching honesty and vivid detail Swenson paints the grim reality of addiction and its impact upon her young son, her family and society.

As Joey, her bright and talented son who held so much promise skates through high school and prepares for college, behavioral changes signal concern but nothing more than usual teen missteps. In time, as the degree and persistence of the problems escalate, Swenson and her husband start to break through their denial, realizing he has a problem and then set out to do all in their power to save him from himself. Joey becomes her main focus, though she is aware she is neglecting her younger son, Rick. She tracks Joey daily on social media, drives around to find him, pays thousands of dollar for rehab treatment. And Joey gets worse despite all her valiant efforts.

Swenson maps her grueling journey through facing the addiction that has stolen her son from her and awakens to the stark reality that she is fighting an endless battle between the cunning beast of addiction and the undying love she has for her son. She learns to let go in a way that does not mean giving up.

Through the pain and heartache and after years of enduring her son's lies, manipulations, and ongoing havoc that go along with addiction, Swenson begins to look inward and deal with her addiction to her son's addiction. She takes responsibility for her own healing while loving her son and not feeding the addiction.

Swenson's voice is genuine, engaging and powerful. She grabbed my attention from the first page and kept me turning the pages until the end. Her courage in stepping out and sharing such heartache so openly is a source of inspiration and hope for any mother or parent dealing with a child who is struggling with addiction. Her memoir can also serve as an excellent resource for those working with the addicted population.

This is a story that will stay with me as I deal with loving and letting go of but not giving up on my own addicted son.

Cynthia says

This book made me think I was reading my story about my son. Addiction has robbed me of my family. I want to hold my little boy and make it all better. What this book taught me is that it's ok to Let Go and Let God. The hardest thing in my life is not to enable and detaching.

Connie says

Heart wrenching true account of the thoughts, actions and ultimate love of the Mother of a very young addict. Love is often letting go...easier said than done!

Kurt says

I have read 225 books since I first started writing reviews for goodreads in December 2008. I have written reviews for 224 of them. The one book that I did not (could not) write a review for was *Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction* by David Sheff, which I finished reading in July of 2009. At the time, writing a review for this excellent book would have taken more from me than I had to give. It simply would have been too painful for this father of an addict. Parents of addicted children may understand and appreciate the pain I am talking about, but I doubt anyone else can.

No one, including myself, is a perfect parent. But I know that I have always been 100% dedicated to my responsibilities as a father and to the nurturing of my children's minds, bodies, and spirits. So, I will not feel guilt if any of them make bad choices in their lives. But I have tried to keep this particular struggle private – not wanting to deal with the inevitable judgment and possible criticism from others who, not having been through such an experience, are incapable of truly understanding it.

No more shame, no more silence.

Now, six years later, I am still (and I recognize that I will always be) the father of an addict. And even though the same pain, frustration, anger, sorrow, and despair are still with me, I now feel that I can talk openly about it. And so I write this short review of *The Joey Song* which affected me as much and in the

same way as did *Beautiful Boy*.

The Joey Song is a mother's story of her son's addiction. With a few modifications to some of the specifics, Sandra Swenson's story closely resembles my story of my son's addiction. The courage that she displays by so graphically telling her very personal story to the world has inspired me.

Once upon a time I was just a regular mom, stumbling through parenthood like everyone else – and then I had to figure out how to be the mom of an addict. I had to figure out how to love my child without helping to hurt him, how to grieve the loss of my child who's still alive without dying, and how to trade shame and blame for strength.

My baby grew up to be an addict. There was a time when I believed a mother's love could fix anything, but it can't fix this.

The life of a parent loving an addicted child is hard to explain; it's sort of like grieving his death and fighting for his life at the same time.

Donna Barnes says

The place where love and addiction meet.

I've been "dealing" with my son's addiction for 10 years now. I've spent many many hours researching to try to somehow understand. I've spent so much time on my son but this book was for "me." And how sweet it was to read something so relatable. To know that someone, another Mom, loves their addicted son as much as I love my son. And to know that another Mom has made the same mistakes...but out of love. Thank you is not enough.

Nathalie says

I just finished the book...I am speechless. This was like reading the story of my last 2 years with my 20 year old son. This book is an example of courage, thank you for that Sandy!!

It made me feel that I am not alone, I am not the only mother that feels sometimes that his adiction is consuming my life, that I am adicted to my son's adiction and it made me realize how much my younger son (13) is missing his mom without saying anything, that I am letting my younger son live without a mother because everything is shaped and accomodated to my adict son's moods, schedule and unpredictable events. That I need to get better to be there for him and show my older son that I can let go and letting him go is letting him grow. Thank you so much for this book!!

Nathalie

David Doty says

This was a tough book to read, but the author is a gifted writer, and her description of what it is like to be the parent of a young adult drug addict is spot on. In a letter to her 20-year-old son while he was in rehab, the author captures it very well when she says:

"The life of loving an addicted child is hard to explain; it's sort of like grieving your death and fighting for your life at the same time. All while hated, helpless, and alone. It's hope and belief that don't dare come out to play. It's a one-way street of trust and open arms. It's empty words, broken promises, shattered dreams, and tarnished memories. It's watching as a ship slowly capsizes in a storm, and then waiting anxiously for it to right itself. It's nudging the baby bird out of the nest only to discover it can't fly. It's a lot of heartache."

Judy Herzanek says

The Joey Song:
A Mother's Story of Her Son's Addiction

"Over the years, Joey dreamed of becoming a firefighter, a rodeo clown, a fisherman, and a marine biologist, but addict was never on his list. Nor was it on mine."

Throughout *The Joey Song*, Sandy captures an array of emotions that are universal to mothers. Not all have experienced the devastation of an addicted child—but I can guarantee that most moms will relate to her poignant descriptions. She digs deep as we relive similar memories and feel the immense power of one of the strongest bonds on earth—the bond of a mother to her child.

We travel with Sandy, her two small sons and husband, as they evolve from the "perfect American middle-class family" to one that is barely held together—as addiction insidiously destroys her firstborn son Joey.

We observe the process a mother goes through as she fights, claws her way through circumstances that are stacked against her. She states "You can leave an addicted spouse if things get out of control, but you can never, ever leave your child."

Support, hope, lies and excuses, lost hope, holes. She feels her son slipping away. After another heartbreaking holiday Sandy writes, "Even if Joey had come, our evening would still have a hole in it. Because a hole can't be filled, with something that's empty."

Sandy wrestles with the notion of detachment. She writes "We are a hurting bunch, detaching with anger, detaching with despair, and detaching with denial, but we're all trying to get to the place of detaching with love."

The thing that makes this book different from all the other addiction-related writings I have read is the uniquely insightful and heart-wrenching descriptions Sandy uses to describe her innermost feelings. Although her thoughts and memories are uniquely her own, she reaches deep inside the reader to strike a chord and hit upon universal bonds that connect all mothers to their children.

At one point after attending a parent support group, she recounts, "We're just a drop in the bucket, this roomful of moms and dads. There are millions of us outside these doors, but a deluge of raindrops doesn't make any single drop less wet."

Wrestling with the notion of “hitting bottom” Sandy writes “There’s no telling when, or if, or how, an addict will hit “bottom,” but “bottom” is not going to be hit while lying on a freshly made bed of roses. It’ll happen while skating around on thin ice.”

“The Joey Song” is interspersed with flashbacks to happier times, memories (memories that are universal to all families—all moms). As Sandy feels herself losing her son she writes, “I love the son that is mine—the son that’s in there somewhere—but this is not my son. I don’t know this person wearing my son’s skin. This is a twisted caricature of Joey and I hate him. My Joes is gone. Consumed by an addict.”

Sandy slowly learns to face the truth and she states, “...We have given up on helping the addict. We’re done paying the addict’s ransom.”

There are times in which Joey seems to reappear and Sandy silently speaks to him “You are special Joey. Do whatever it takes to find yourself again. Addiction is the only thing you have left to lose.” And then unexpectedly, The Addict awakens.

Sandy’s story will have an impact on many families. It is not one with a “fairy tale ending.” Her story is one of struggle, denial, turmoil and ultimately of newfound strength and resolve.

Readers will come to realize they are not alone in their struggles with an addicted loved one. They will learn that this world of addiction is crazy, where it seems as though everything is turned upside down. It is a place where helping actually harms and where hope hurts. Readers will discover that “sometimes love means doing nothing rather than doing something, and letting go is not the same thing as giving up.”

This story is brutally real. It will educate families and help prepare them to deal with what their future may hold. Sandy sums up “The Joey Song” with “Addiction is not just a word. Not just one note. It’s a tragic symphony.”

Realizing that she must begin her own recovery, Sandy discovers that this can happen even if it doesn’t happen within the addict. She writes “A person must be prepared to come to terms with what addiction has done to their family, grieve and start the process of finding their way back.”

I place “The Joey Song” on my list of the top 10 most helpful books for families dealing with addiction.

Judy Herzanek/Changing Lives Foundation

Co-author, “Why Don’t They Just Quit? What families and friends need to know about addiction and recovery.”

Kim Mask says

Heartbreaking

Dealing with addiction is never over,we think about it 24/7.,but reading this shows us how to let go. Just what I needed to hear right now. Kim mask

christina barea says

Agonisingly raw pain. Unless you are a parent of an addict you cannot imagine the pain we live with

I cried from start to finish our stories are very similar anyone who has a child addict will connect on many different levels especially that letting go really is love. My deepest prayers go out to the Swenson family.

Cheryl Dicken says

I thought Sandy Swenson had been spying on my life when I read this book! I finished in 2 days...it spoke to my heart in so many ways, validating my experience with my addicted son, and helping me to know I wasn't crazy!! The events in the story SO paralleled mine frequently!! Thank you SO SO MUCH for being so articulate and transparent in writing this book. I am buying a few copies to share, and definitely will be re-reading!!

P.S. Prayed for Joey today.

Laura says

This book is a must read for anyone who loves an addict. Sandy tells her story of loving her son, the addict, and writes all of the feelings, emotions and struggles that parents go through when their lives turn from being a "regular" parent to a parent of an addict. This story ended giving me strength, but also showed me that other parents are struggling with grieving a child that is still alive.

This book can really help parents learning about their son/daughters addiction and help them realize that there is NOTHING we can do. Its all about THEM finding their recovery. It's about taking care of ourselves and our families as this disease will destroy anything and everything in its path. One of the best books I have read about the journey and what is needed to give our kids a chance at life.

David Cooke says

“The Joey Song – A Mother’s Story of Her Son’s Addiction” is a powerful, honest, and very authentic story of a mom's journey with her oldest son’s addiction.

Every parent dealing with addiction in their world has a story. Their stories are often painful, disturbing, heartbreaking and quite difficult to share and articulate. While each of these parent stories is unique, they all share many common or similar threads to that of other parents dealing with addiction.

Not every parent is willing to or are capable of being open about their issues, challenges and experiences with addiction. While every parent's addiction related journey is real, painful, and troubling, it can be difficult to find the courage, the safe haven, or the comfort to share them. I applaud and respect Sandy for her ability to find a cathartic release in capturing her thoughts, feelings, ideas, and emotions in writing.

This is a very powerful, insightful read. Sandy does not sugar coat her story. It is open, honest, vulnerable, and insightful. She holds nothing back, shares everything and hides nothing. Most importantly these insights, while telling a story, are also accurate perspectives from her journey that every parent dealing with addiction in their family can all learn from.

Thank you, Sandy for sharing "The Joey Song" with us.
