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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ SELF-HELP

It's Okay to be Dumbfounded, Just Don't Stay That Way! From Co-Addiction, Addiction to Recovery- Doing whatever it takes to live a healthy life free from addiction

Addie Lee
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Spouses of alcoholics will oftentimes experience their own symptoms of dependence and struggle alongside their partners as they both journey toward recovery. These spouses are known as *co-addicts*.

Interweaving her story and that of her alcoholic husband's with research from addiction-recovery specialist Alice LeBron, Addie Lee illustrates how co-addicts and their partners can successfully navigate through dependence to health in her bracingly honest and concise book, *It's Okay to be Dumbfounded, Just Don't Stay That Way!*

In the first part of the book, the alternating voices of Addie and her husband, Geoff, plunge readers into the intimate and often rocky road of families with an alcoholic member. Poignant vignettes take readers along for the ride—from a roller-coaster courtship to a triumphant, alcohol-free life. Lee's juxtaposition of her story with that of Geoff's will convince skeptics that co-addicts must also undergo their own wellness process.

The author writes about maintaining a superwoman persona while Geoff's drinking worsens. Her constant anxiety over her husband's behavior is palpable and will make even the calmest of readers jittery. She narrates with painful candor the effect of his disease on their children. Young Kevin and Sally act out, making readers ache for them. Refreshingly, Geoff comes across as a remorseful man, worried for his family as he flounders to find a balance among his cravings, work, and home life.

Although many readers may possess general knowledge of the phases of alcohol addiction and recovery, Addie's experience as a co-addict is instructive for spouses of addicts and can help them realize they are on a parallel journey with their dependent partners. Her openness helps readers feel less alone and a useful resource list at the close of the volume provides information on where to get help.

A glossary of key terms and an introduction to Alice LeBron's ideas at the outset would provide critical context. Instead, Lee uses LeBron's terminology in the first section, but does not introduce readers to LeBron's theories until the second section. Readers may find the italicization of Geoff's point of view annoying. And, although the couple has been sober for twenty-eight years, the cover sports a head shot of a young woman.

All these missteps, however, fade in the face of the author's raw honesty about the important subject of co-addiction. *It's Okay to be Dumbfounded, Just Don't Stay That Way!* will be valuable to anyone who has experienced substance abuse or has lived with an alcoholic. It is also a good reference for substance-abuse treatment professionals.

JILL ALLEN (October 25, 2011)

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