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Family & Relationships

The Mystery of Risk: Drugs, Alcohol, Pregnancy, and the Vulnerable Child
Ira J. Chasnoff
NTI Upstream
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They are the vulnerable ones: little children exposed prenatally to drugs and alcohol, rejected for those very issues, then placed in positions throughout life that make overcoming them increasingly difficult. And those called to love and care for these children often find themselves worn out and overwhelmed. These children, as well as those adults caring for them, need love and support. In *The Mystery of Risk*, Dr. Ira Chasnoff seeks to offer understanding, guidance, wisdom, and hope for these families.

Chasnoff delves into the ways a pregnant mother's use of drugs and alcohol changes her unborn child's brain and how those changes alter the way a child processes information, thinks, and behaves. He shows how these things impact that child's life over time and walks through exactly what to expect from drug- and alcohol-exposed children. The author then suggests practical ways teachers and parents—whether biological, foster, or adoptive—can improve the child's behavior, social interactions, and education.

The author's sensitivity and expertise firmly ground this book. Chasnoff is a medical doctor, a professor of clinical pediatrics at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago, and the president of the Children's Research Triangle. One of the leading researchers in the field of prenatal exposure to alcohol and illegal drugs, he has authored eight books.

Along with his clinical wisdom, Chasnoff's love and concern for drug and alcohol exposed children and their families shine through every page. He writes sensitively and supportively, never minimizing the difficulties such children and families face. He shares compelling real-life stories that not only explain the issues he covers, but clearly show how to understand and respond to various behaviors and problems. Occasionally the book reads a bit like a textbook, particularly in the beginning, but wading through those moments soon returns readers to the highly readable voice that dominates.

This book will likely not meet the needs of pregnant mothers still struggling with drugs

and alcohol. However, it well serves any doctor or teacher who works with drug- and alcohol-exposed children. And it is essential for any parent, foster or adoptive, trying to love and raise these most vulnerable children.

Diane Gardner