

Bibliotherapy: Children of Alcoholics and Addicts

Alexa Catanzarite

University of Pittsburgh

December 2011

## Annotated Bibliography

### **BOOKS FOR CHILDREN**

Berenstain, S. (1993). *The Berenstain bears and the drug free zone*. New York, NY: Random House.

Stan Berenstain, a renowned children's author, wrote this fiction chapter book as part of the Berenstain Bears series, a collection of over 50 stories about a family of bears and their adventures. This book contains illustrations and is intended for children 4 years of age and older. The plot tells of how Brother and Sister Bear seek to determine how illegal drugs turn up in their school. This book helps young children gain an awareness of illicit drugs and the associated risks and dangers.

Black, C. (1997). *My dad loves me, my dad has a disease: A child's view: living with addiction*. San Francisco, CA: Mac Publishing.

Claudia Black wrote this book after working as a counselor in an alcohol and drug treatment center. During this time, she often interacted with children whose parents were recovering alcoholics and addicts. In fact, the title of this work originated from a statement that a six-year-old child made to Black about her alcoholic father. Black's book reinforces the notion that chemical dependency is a disease that affects the alcoholic/addict as well as their loved ones. Black's work is unique in that all of the illustrations were drawn by children ages five through fourteen who had alcoholic parents. It enables children of these ages to work through their thoughts and feelings and gain a better understanding of addiction as they embark on their own road to recovery. In addition, it can

provide insights to adults who grew up in addictives homes.

Carrick, C. (1995). *Banana Beer*. Morton Grove, IL: A Whitman.

*Banana Beer* is a useful resource for teachers and parents alike who wish to educate and prompt discussion among their students and children about alcoholism. The main protagonist is Charlie, an orangutan whose father drinks too much. As such, Charlie experiences shame and guilt regarding his dad's disease and his parent's marital troubles. While these issues are complex because they extend to each member of the family, the author touches on the fact that many families are like Charlie's, and support is indeed available to them. In addition, the story is accompanied by illustrations, making the subject matter more understandable to young readers. It is most appropriate for children in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Higgins, P. L. (1995). *Up and down the mountain: helping children cope with parental alcoholism*. Liberty Corner, NJ: Small Horizons.

Author Pamela Leib Higgins runs a childcare facility in New Jersey in addition to writing children's literature. This story begins on the day of Jenny's sixth grade graduation as she wonders whether her alcoholic father will attend the ceremony as promised. Higgins' book is intended for children ages 4-8 and provides them with hope as they deal with the many upsets of living with an alcoholic parent. A unique characteristic of this book is oil painting displayed across every page.

Johnston, M. (1996). *Let's talk about alcohol abuse*. New York, NY: The Rosen

Publishing Group, Inc.

Marianne Johnston is the author of a series of books that examine various issues that children deal with growing up. All of her books are suited for younger children in kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grades. This book in particular provides children with straightforward information about what alcohol is, who uses alcohol, parental drinking, alcohol and the brain, alcohol and the body, negative effects of alcohol, alcoholism, how alcohol affects personality, how alcohol abuse affects everyone, peer pressure, and responsibility.

Thomas, J. R. (1996). *Daddy doesn't have to be a giant anymore*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

Jane Resh Thomas is a decorated author of children's books and a recipient of the 2001 Kerlan Award for her contributions to children's literature. She has written over 15 children's books and also works as an editor. This book depicts the story of a little girl as she recounts the stark contrast between the fun-loving, gentle father that she knows and adores and the "angry giant" that he becomes when he's drunk. Ultimately, her father's alcoholism has impacted her ability to trust him. Her family decides to stage an intervention, which compels her father to seek help from a treatment program. The story is told from the narrator's perspective, making it an appropriate read for children between the ages of 5 and 9. Readers may understand that they are not alone in their fear of an alcoholic parent. The text is also accompanied by pen-and-ink, watercolor, and pastel illustrations.

## BOOKS FOR ADOLESCENTS

Anderson, P. K. (1992). *Safe at home!* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.

Peggy King Anderson has been writing children's books since 1981. Her first book entitled *Coming Home* told the story of a child coping with her father's alcoholism. Her follow up work called *Safe at Home* is a narrative of Tony, a sixth-grade boy who's struggling with the absence of his father as well as his mother's alcoholism. Initially, Tony's parents deny the severity of the situation, telling Tony and his younger sister Christy that their father is away on business and that their mother is sick with the flu. Tony bears the brunt of the household responsibilities, often caring for his sick mother and his sister Christy. Tony's feelings of fear, anger, and confusion in dealing with his mother's problems likely resonate with other children of alcoholics. Ultimately, Tony's father returns home and the family finally comes to terms with the harsh reality that Tony's mother is battling alcoholism. This book is recommended for children ages 8-12, and can also help early childhood educators gain a sense of real-life issues that students deal with at home.

Hall, L., & L. Cohn. (1988). *Dear kids of alcoholics*. Carlsbad, CA.: Gurze Books.

Authors Lindsey Hall and Leigh Cohn are a married couple who have written extensively about eating disorders and other recovery topics. Many of their books have been translated into other languages. This story in particular is intended for children of alcoholic parents ages 8-17. The main character, Jason, educates readers about alcoholism and describes his father's struggle with

alcohol. This book is a valuable resource for teachers, parents, and childhood practitioners. It contains a glossary and definitions that can be used to teach children about alcoholism and how it affects families.

Hughes, D. (1994). *The trophy*. New York, NY: Knopf.

Dean Hughes received his PhD in literature from the University of Washington in Seattle. As an accomplished author, Hughes has written over 80 fiction and nonfiction books for all age groups. He won an AML Award for Young Adult Literature for his novel entitled *The Trophy*. This book is intended for children in grades 4 through 6. The stories' main character is ten-year-old Danny, an avid basketball player who struggles both on and off the court as he attempts to perfect his athletic skills and also cope with his father's alcoholism. Despite his efforts, Danny never seems to gain his father's approval. Readers can relate to this character as they gain an accurate portrayal of a child of an alcoholic. This book may empower children who find themselves in similar situations. It may also help them be more inclined to reach out to a trusted member of the community regarding their parent's substance abuse.

Jance, J. A. (2007). *Emmy's question*. St. Augustine, FL.: Morningtidepress.

Judith Ann Jance is a *New York Times* best selling author of mystery and horror novels. In contrast, her book *Emmy's Question* focuses on Emmy, a ten-year-old girl who desperately wants to fit in among her peers. She's constantly ridiculed at school for her mother's drinking problem. Her mother's addiction intensifies when she shows up to Emmy's school dance recital intoxicated. Desperate for help but unable to talk to her teachers at school, Emmy writes her

feelings of emptiness in her diary. However, when Emmy's mother leaves the family, Emmy seeks professional help in order to cope with her loss. Through counseling, Emmy is able to regain love for herself and for her mother. This book is most beneficial for schoolteachers who can use it within a reading group or as a discussion piece. It is most appropriate for children ages 9 and up.

Mercury, C. (Ed.). (1996). *Think of wind*. New York, NY: One Big Press.

Catherine Mercury wrote this book for her niece and nephew who are children of an alcoholic father. It tells the story of a boy whose father is an alcoholic. Mercury likens the environment of this child affected by alcoholism to that of the wind, you can't see it, but you can see how it makes trees act. She addresses the fact that alcoholism has an impact on the whole family, making day-to-day life very confusing and unpredictable for children. This book would be beneficial to use in schools as a tool to help children express their experiences and feelings in dealing with an addictive family member. Parents may also find it helpful to read along with their child. It is suitable for children between the ages of six and fourteen.

Langsen, R. (1996). *When someone in the family drinks too much*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Author Richard Langsen is a family therapist and teacher who wrote this book for children ages 6 to 10. The story explains what alcoholism is, the impact that it has on the family, and where one can get help. He also encourages discussion among readers of the book regarding common feelings shared by family members of alcoholics. The story is accompanied by illustrations of

a bear family that depict scenes pertaining to the text. This book is recommended for use among children and their parents.

Moe, J., & Pohlman, D. (1989). *Kids' power: healing games for children of alcoholics*. Tucson, AZ: ImaginWorks.

Jerry Moe is the Vice President and National Director for Children's Programs at the Betty Ford Center as well as an advisory board member of the National Association for Children of Alcoholics. His book presents games and activities that are designed for children ages 6-12 within families where substance abuse is prevalent. Each game and activity is structured to promote teamwork and cooperation, helping children assess situations and make positive, healthy decisions. In addition, the activities focus on topics such as feelings, the disease of chemical dependency, family, defenses, problem solving, and self-esteem.

Palmore, E. M. (2011). *The dragon who lives at our house*. Minneapolis, MN: Rising Star Studios, LLC.

Palmore's work is part of a series called Fresh Fables that helps children deal with difficult issues. This particular tale is suited for children between the ages of 7 and 9 who are struggling with a family member's substance abuse. The pages are colorfully illustrated to tell the story of Al the dragon who resides with the narrator and his family. Al forces the family out of the house before seeking treatment and reconciling with the family. Palmore states that she was inspired to write this book by her experience as a public school teacher where there were far



too few resources for families in crisis.

Stewart, S. (2011). *Sometimes my mom drinks too much*. Broomall, PA.: Mason Crest Publishers.

This book, one in a series of 13, is divided into two sections, making it useful across all contexts. The first is the story of Sam, a young girl whose mother suffers from alcoholism. She describes her mother's erratic and dangerous behavior, which culminates in setting fire to the house. It's at that point that her mother decides to get help. The second half of the book provides factual information and full color photographs that provide teachers, early childhood professionals, and children with an understanding of common definitions, characteristics, and feelings associated with alcoholism in addition to problem-solving strategies. The recommended age is 10 and up.