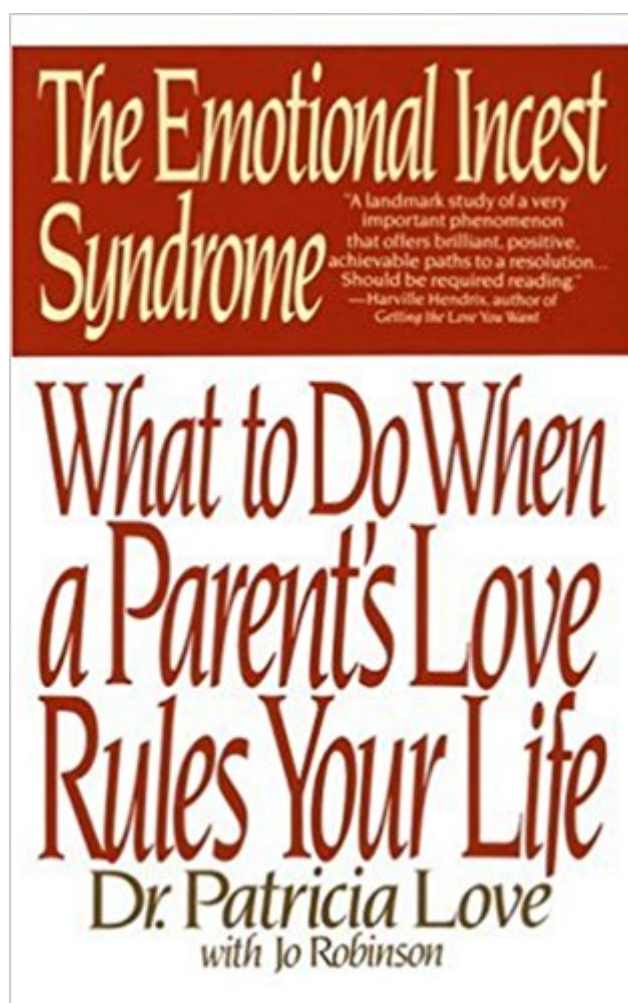


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# The Emotional Incest Syndrome: What To Do When A Parent's Love Rules Your Life



## Synopsis

From Dr. Patricia Love, a ground-breaking work that identifies, explores and treats the harmful effects that emotionally and psychologically invasive parents have on their children, and provides a program for overcoming the chronic problems that can result.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dr. Patricia Love grew up in Sistersville, West Virginia, and received her doctorate in counseling from West Virginia University. She is a licensed professional counselor, and a clinical member/approved supervisor in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. She is the author of *Hot Monogamy*, *The Truth About Love*, and *The Emotional Incest Syndrome*. Dr. Love currently resides in Austin, Texas, where she continues to write, practice, and consult, promoting the concept of family reconciliation and healthy family functioning. Jo Robinson is the *New York Times* bestselling author and coauthor of many books, including *Hot Monogamy*, *The Emotional Incest Syndrome*, *Melatonin*, and *The Omega Diet*.

This author has (had) the potential to really help adult children who grew up in an emotionally incestuous household. The beginning, when she provides an illustration of emotional incest, was really, really validating for me and helped me understand a lot of the complexities of my personality--things that seemed like positive traits in myself and my parent but that resulted in really yucky feelings. I am dismayed at the 1-star reviewers who view the behavior outlined in the book as

normal--it is not normal or healthy. As someone who is desperately trying to break free of the very damaging dynamics between my mother and myself now that I am a parent, I took a lot of comfort from the author's assertion that emotional incest is not the child's fault, but that as adults we are empowered to break free and not repeat the cycle. Where I began to panic while reading the book is in the section about recovery. Love never addresses the fact that some adult children may really NEED to break off ties with an abusive parent. She does a great job of helping the reader understand that the parent probably was unaware of their harmful actions, but fails the reader by implying that children have a lifelong obligation to their parents, including seeing to it that their parents receive care when they are elderly. I think these are good general social rules to follow, but in the case of abusive parent-child relationships, the child should feel no obligation to allow the parent to remain a part of his or her life. People dealing with the aftereffects of emotional incest and realizing the damage it has done in their lives are in a vulnerable place, and it is very, very, very difficult to build the strength, courage, and self-affirmation necessary to break away from an abusive, emotionally over-involved parent (and Love implies that breaking away is absolutely necessary). For me, the suggestion that it's not OK to take space from the parent, temporarily or permanently, seemed like very poor advice. Love describes boundary setting and knowing limits and implies that by merely stating limits and boundaries the relationship can be healthy. Perhaps this simple solution works for some, but I'm guessing that many people who picked up this book have tried many, many times to set boundaries only to have them broken time and again and who continue to suffer emotional abuse and little separation from an invasive parent. For me, setting boundaries has not worked. I wish she would have given some advice in the exceptional situations where a parent will not let go of his or her control over a child, where abuse may come into play, and where it may be necessary for an adult child to more completely separate and grant themselves the freedom from obligation to a parent, whether that means cutting the parent out of their life or not. So, I thought the book explained the syndrome very well and was very validating, but the author fails to see the process of healing through to the end by jumping to suggestions about managing the parent's behavior and insisting that a child remain obligated to the parent in question because it's not his or her fault that the emotional incest occurred. I get it--it's really taboo to cut a parent out of your life. But let's face it, some people grew up with a toxic-enough parent who continues to rule their life that it's the only way, if only temporarily. I felt she passed judgment in a subtle way on people who choose not to continue a relationship with a parent, which is sad because anyone dealing with this is probably already bogged down with a crushing guilt about even acknowledging a parent's serious faults. Good read, not to be taken on without a good therapist to work through this

syndrome though.

I recognized many aspects of my own youth and early life in this book and came to a deeper understanding of the family dynamics that shaped my development into an adult. The title may be slightly misleading but the material is rational and understandable. It should help many people who sensed there was "something wrong" with their early life and been unable to get a grasp on it. With this, you probably can. Then you can start the process of forgiving yourself and those who caused you pain and distress which is a key step in healing.

This should be read by all parents, especially those who do not know the difference between parenting & "friending." You may do both, but sometimes the friendship disables the parenting. That is our job first, to parent. Just as God disciplines, we should discipline our kids so they won't grow up disrespectful and feeling entitled. They need to be taught how to appreciate things, & we do not do them any favors by doing everything for them. This keeps them from learning how to get along in society. You must earn a certain portion of respect; therefore, we must teach them how to gain it. All of this is done in love, & you will never hear your children use the words, "I need discipline," or, "Please do not let me attend this function,..." but they need boundaries and discipline. And when they don't have these, they can act out in negative ways. That's when parents think they need to kick the "friendship" & overbearing "love & protection" into overdrive. This only enhances the problem.

Wow. This book is extremely validating for anyone who grew up with an invasive parent. I didn't even know there was a name for what I went through growing up...and I didn't actually realize how much it affected me until I read this. The first half of the book was extremely helpful in describing emotional incest, health and unhealthy family dynamics. The second half of the book describes tools and methods to break free from emotional incest...I found some of these tools helpful, but others did not appeal to me.

Despite the ick-factor of the title, this is a life-changing book. My husband was loaned a copy after a discussion with a friend about a Psychology Today article on difficult mothers "Mother, Damned-est." After reading the book, his eyes were opened to how his childhood was damaging our marriage and it actually started him on a difficult journey of reframing his world. He asked me to read the book too. This book shed light on many issues in our marriage and helped me understand

my husband in ways I hadn't before. We've recommended it to many people and have purchased a few copies for friends who have been blown away by this book. This book is not an excuse to blame your parents for problems in your life, but rather something to illuminate and explain issues and, hopefully, be a catalyst for personal and interpersonal growth. This book changed my husband's life and, thus, our marriage.

Wow, I mean WOW!!! This book has my family and I pegged completely, even with the first couple of chapters. I felt like someone had written about my life in this book without my prior authorization! lol I'm writing things down, and trying to process it all. It may take a little time, as some people may be more affected by this book, so just take it as you can. I'm hoping this book will help me to break the cycle with my kids, so they can have more normal happier lives. If you have enmeshed family ties that aren't healthy, and you need to break that cycle, this book is definitely for you! This book has little assignments for you to do in helping peg down where family ties are too close for comfort, and how to regain your life for you. I highly highly recommend this book!!!

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