

Trapped in the Mirror: Adult Children of Narcissists in their Struggle for Self

By Elan Golomb

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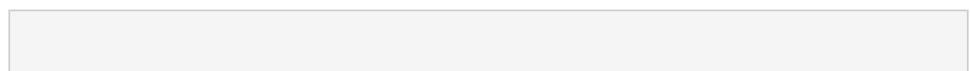
In this compelling book, Elan Golomb identifies the crux of the emotional and psychological problems of millions of adults. Simply put, the children of narcissist -- offspring of parents whose interest always towered above the most basic needs of their sons and daughters -- share a common belief: They believe they do not have the right to exist.

The difficulties experienced by adult children of narcissists can manifest themselves in many ways: for examples, physical self-loathing that takes form of overeating, anorexia, or bulimia; a self-destructive streak that causes poor job performance and rocky personal relationships; or a struggle with the self that is perpetuated in the adult's interaction with his or her own children. These dilemmas are both common and correctable, Dr. Golomb tells us.

With an empathic blend of scholarship and case studies, along with her own personal narrative of her fight for self, Dr. Golomb plumbs the depths of this problem, revealing its mysterious hold on the affairs of otherwise bright, aware, motivated, and worthy people. *Trapped in the Mirror* explores.

- the nature of the paralysis and lack of motivation so many adults feel
- stress and its role in exacerbating childhood wrongs
- why do many of our relationships seem to be "reruns" of the past
- how one's body image can be formed by faulty parenting
- how anger must be acknowledge to be overcome
- and, most important, how even the most traumatized self can be healed.

Rooted in a profoundly humanist traditional approach, and suffused with the benefit of the latest knowledge about intrafamily relationships, *Trapped in the Mirror* offers more than the average self-help book; it is truly the first self-heal book for millions.



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

It seems reasonable to expect self-help books to accomplish one of three goals: to explain behavior, to assist readers to develop their potential or to change unwanted behavior patterns, or to motivate readers. This book fails on all three counts. People who may be attracted to the concept have probably already realized that their relationship with a self-absorbed parent has caused problems, and they will not learn much else. The suggestions for change are too general to be useful, and the tone is at times spiteful and depressing. Susan Forward and Buck Craig's *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* (Bantam, 1989) covers the same topic in a more positive and helpful fashion. Not recommended.

- *Mary Ann Hughes, Washington State Univ. Libs., Pullman*

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From Kirkus Reviews

A sober study by a clinical psychologist of the destructive legacy that narcissistic parents bequeath to their children and the troubling characteristics those children share as adults. Narcissists behave, Golomb says, as if they are the center of the universe, organizing their lives around denial of negative feelings about themselves. Their children, forced to conform to parental thinking, grow up with a range of subtle emotional disabilities, most commonly a distorted view of their capacities. All too frequently this damaged sense of self-worth interferes with their search for autonomy, their performance, and with their other adult relationships. Golomb, child of a narcissistic father, gives examples from the lives of friends and patients, as well as from her own experiences, and shows how these strained views of reality can be passed along from one generation to the next or can shadow an entire family's happiness. She is particularly adept in discussing why some people persist in the most puzzling behaviors (bankrolling one lover after another, for example) and how they see and defend these patterns. Although Golomb has experimented with meditation techniques and group treatment, she finds psychoanalytic psychotherapy the most consistently helpful set of strategies and suggests ways for adults to approach narcissistic parents and to change the nature of these relationships. "Narcissism is a tale of codependency," she observes. "If we want to be treated in a different way, the change in treatment must start with how we present ourselves to [narcissists]." Golomb writes in language more accessible to other therapists than to general readers, unleavened by humor, and without a specific agenda. But difficult as her approach may be, it's sound and ultimately rewarding as well. -- *Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

About the Author

Elan Golomb is a graduate of Bennington College and earned her Ph.D. in clinical psychology and her certificate in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy from New York University. She has been in private practice in New York since 1972.

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