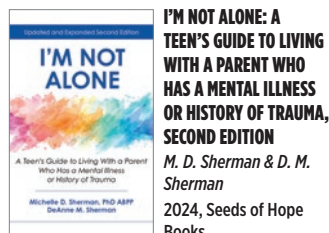


I'm Not Alone: A Teen's Guide to Living With a Parent Who Has a Mental Illness or History of Trauma, Second Edition

REVIEWED BY CLAIRE CORLISS

I'm Not Alone: A Teen's Guide to Living With a Parent Who Has a Mental Illness or History of Trauma is a concise, compassionate, and developmentally sensitive guide written for adolescents navigating the experience of living with a parent who has a mental illness or trauma history. Now in its second edition, the book blends clinical insight and lived experience in a way that honors the complexity of the topic without overwhelming the reader. Coauthored by clinical psychologist Michelle D. Sherman and her mother, mental health advocate and educator DeAnne Sherman, the book offers a valuable dual lens of professional expertise alongside personal understanding.



The book is structured into four parts. The first, "Getting Started," introduces the purpose of the book and invites teens to reflect on their own stories. The second section, "Understanding the Basics," provides clear, accessible explanations of mental illness, trauma, PTSD, substance use, and treatment options. Part Three, "Living With a Parent Who Has a Mental Illness or History of Trauma," explores

emotional regulation, peer dynamics, stigma, and what it means to manage the ups and downs of daily life. Finally, the fourth part, "Taking Care of Your Own Mental Health," emphasizes coping skills, crisis planning, and long-term resilience. Each chapter is brief, direct, and written in a tone that respects teen readers' intelligence and autonomy without vilifying parents, even as they may struggle with mental illness, trauma, or substance use.

I anticipate *I'm Not Alone* will be a particularly effective tool. Too often, professionals are left without adequate resources to support students affected by parental mental illness; the authors themselves recognize the lack of resources to address this growing population. This book bridges that gap. It aligns well with trauma-informed practice, avoids pathologizing students, and balances psychoeducation with emotional support.

Throughout the text, the Shermans include journaling prompts, teen voices, and reflection questions, tools that invite self-exploration without requiring it. The design is clean and uncluttered, making the content more approachable, especially for students with attention or processing challenges.

In the school context, *I'm Not Alone* is highly adaptable. It could be used in group interventions, individual counseling, or even as part of reentry support following a crisis at home. Some teens may at first reject the idea of engaging independently with a book that embarks on such a personal topic, but I intend to use the text as a tool in a counseling setting. For adolescents who are reluctant to discuss their family challenges directly, the book may offer a low-pressure, high-impact alternative to traditional therapeutic materi-

als. Its grounding in youth voice also lends it credibility; students are more likely to feel seen and understood.

The book does presume a certain level of literacy, emotional readiness, and environmental stability. It is not a substitute for therapy, it may be inaccessible to some students who struggle with grade-level text, and it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Practitioners should be thoughtful in determining which students are appropriate candidates for its use. However, when applied with care, *I'm Not Alone* has the potential to make a lasting impact on a young person's sense of safety, identity, and agency.

What I most appreciated about the book is its refusal to oversimplify. It acknowledges the discomfort, ambivalence, and emotional dissonance that many students feel without jumping to "silver lining" or quick-fix conclusions. In this way, the Shermans have created a resource that is not only practical but respectful of the emotional intelligence of teens, a rare achievement in this space.

I'm Not Alone is a thoughtful, flexible, and empowering tool for school-based mental health professionals. It deserves a place on the bookshelf of any school psychologist working with adolescents. ●

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