

Book Review

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Love Must Be Tough: Proven Hope for Families in Crisis

by James C. Dobson, Ph.D. Dallas, Tex., Word Books, 1996, \$19.99.

Love Must Be Tough: Proven Hope for Families in Crisis is a layman's text on dealing with relationships in crisis. The author states that when a spouse strays, loses interest in his or her partner, or develops destructive habits that harm the bond between the partners, the most productive course is for the wounded party to act decisively to stop the disrespectful acts instead of engaging in passive behavior. The author feels that to effectively save a relationship the wounded party must clarify that the undesired behavior will result in the termination of the relationship. This willingness to end a relationship is the very essence of freedom and independence. The concept of 2 individuals working together for the benefit of the other is at the heart of a good relationship, and when the balance of power switches so that one person has undue control, the potential for abuse of that power becomes imminent. Once individuals have the opportunity to do anything with the tacit acceptance of their partner, they have carte blanche to engage in destructive patterns of behavior without fear of losing the benefits of the relationship.

The book gives many examples of couples in which one partner engaged in sexual affairs or used illicit substances. When the other partner accepts this behavior to attempt to maintain the relationship, trust and respect diminish until the relationship eventually ends. The author's approach to ending destructive behavior is to confront the behavior and give the partner a choice between the relationship and the act. The author believes that accepting behavior allows the relationship to end slowly and fails to salvage the union. Therefore, it is better to present the partner with a choice to continue the undesired behavior or continue the relationship at the beginning of any problem than to let the problem cause a slow destruction of the bonds between 2 people, fostering increased resentment and psychosocial morbidity.

In my family practice setting, it is not uncommon for patients to seek a physician's advice on familial problems and expect wisdom and insight into their situation. In my experience, the problems seem to stem from an imbalance of power and a permissive atmosphere in the relationship. For these patients, I recommend that they read this book to realize that they are sanctioning their partner's behaviors by accepting them. They are, therefore, allowed to become proactive by learning how to help themselves, rather than expecting me to conduct long sessions of cognitive therapy.

This book is on a basic level and does not engage in any deep psychoanalysis of the individuals mentioned as examples. It has a common-sense approach that is appealing. The author speaks from a Christian perspective, which may not be to everyone's liking, but religious conversion is not the author's intent. The book is often redundant, but that is sometimes a necessary feature. Having recommended this book to several individuals and having received only positive feedback from them, I will continue to use it as a valuable resource for troubled patients.

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