

on your mind

A PUBLICATION OF CHILD & FAMILY PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES



MORE BOOK REVIEWS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Dance of Anger

*The Seven Principles for
Making Marriage Work*

The Transgender Child

Loving Someone Gay

*How to Survive
the Loss of a Love*

The Gifts of Imperfection

Unbroken Brain

*Supporting Children
After a Suicide Loss*

The Whole-Brain Child

Love Sense

BOOKS WE LOVE

Looking for a good book on mental health?

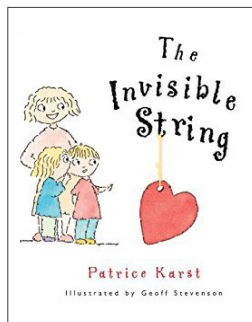
CFPS therapists review some of their favorites

Choices abound when it comes to books on psychology and mental health topics. Search for “anxiety” on Amazon.com, for example, and you’ll find more than 30,000 titles. For “addiction,” 40,000. Looking for just the “right” book can feel a bit overwhelming.

Our clinicians love to read, so we asked them to recommend some of their favorite books in any category of mental health. In this issue of *On Your Mind*, you’ll find recommended books on everything from making marriage last to supporting a transgender child to surviving loss to learning self-acceptance.

If you would like a book recommendation on a topic not covered here, please ask your therapist or contact our business office at (269)372-4140 and we’ll ask our clinical staff for recommendations for you.

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst



The Invisible String was given to me by a trusted colleague when I first began working as a school counselor. The story is really simple. It involves twins who wake up during the night experiencing fear over a storm and therefore want to be close to their mom. She explains that an invisible string connects everyone to those they love, even when they are not physically close.

From an emotional standpoint, I really enjoy this book because it can be shared thoughtfully for many purposes. Through the years, I have found very positive outcomes sharing this book with children struggling with separation anxiety, family transitions, divorce, relocation, changes in custody, even death. I have found that the idea of connectedness can be a very powerful concept to introduce and explore.

The pictures are simple yet they creatively illustrate the concept that even when we are apart we are always connected. The book prompts readers to consider who they are strongly aligned with, as well as how they might know this and feel it at all times. *The Invisible String* validates the difficulty and uncertainty of separation and can initiate discussion of strategies for building upon connectivity in relationships.

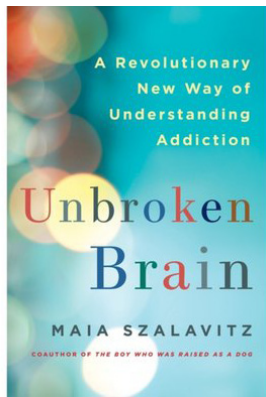
— Jennifer Gruel, LPC

cfps

Child & Family Psychological Services, P.C.

Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction

by Maia Szalavitz



In *Unbroken Brain*, science writer Maia Szalavitz uses a combination of her own personal history of addiction, a review of relevant research and an engaging writing style to propose a fascinating new way to view addiction.

She argues that addiction has typically been viewed in two ways. One way is from a viewpoint of moralism where someone who is struggling with addiction is seen as

“bad” or “immoral” and unwilling to change despite negative consequences. The other is that of the medical model, where addiction is seen as a brain disease in which the addict has no control over the addiction.

Szalavitz believes that neither of these views accurately captures addiction and proposes that addiction is actually a developmental disorder, more specifically a learning disorder. While at first glance this may seem far-fetched, she uses real-life examples as well as compelling evidence and research to answer some questions that were previously unanswered by earlier theories of addiction. This book has the potential to make readers seriously rethink their own preconceived ideas about addiction and its treatment, as I know it did for myself.

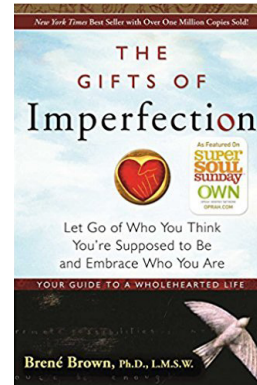
Throughout the book, Szalavitz discusses numerous other issues related to addiction and its treatment, including the ineffectiveness of criminalization of drugs, the history of drug laws in the United States and concerns and explanations of ineffective treatments, all with an informative and captivating style. She also has insightful and unique ideas about how to better treat addictions, implement prevention programs and change policy in order to change the outcomes for addiction in this country.

I recommend this book to anyone who has been impacted by addiction, has loved someone who has been impacted by addiction or who simply wants to have a better understanding of this topic. Szalavitz presents a substantial amount of information in a way that is interesting as well as understandable and relatable. I hope that *Unbroken Brain* will challenge people to think about addiction in new ways and encourage positive change.

— Sarah Krussell, LPC, LLP
Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor

The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are

by Brené Brown



In his song “Anthem,” Leonard Cohen wrote, “There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” I love this quote because it tells us that even where there are flaws — or what we see as flaws — there is beauty. The acceptance of that gentle truth is the essence of Brené Brown’s book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*.

Brown, a researcher, social worker, professor and leading expert on

shame, explains in her book that while researching shame, she discovered a surprising pattern among her study participants: People who were living “amazing and inspiring lives” reported embracing imperfection and vulnerability.

“These research participants trusted themselves, and they talked about authenticity and love and belonging in a way that was completely new to me,” she writes. Brown called these people “wholehearted” because they were living and loving with their whole hearts.

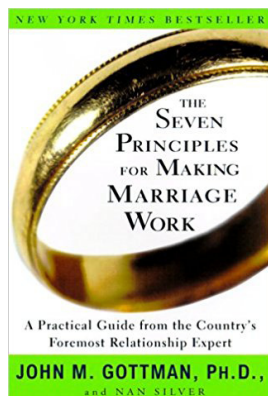
She then takes readers on their own journey by exploring how to cultivate the courage, compassion and connection needed for wholehearted living. She shares 10 common factors in wholehearted people, and devotes a chapter to each of these, including “Cultivating Authenticity: Letting Go of What Other People Think,” “Cultivating Self-Compassion: Letting Go of Perfectionism” and “Cultivating Gratitude and Joy.”

This book offers readers a path that is clear, understandable and, most importantly, doable. What I found especially helpful were the recommendations at the end of each chapter, which Brown calls DIG Deep strategies for getting Deliberate (in your thoughts and behaviors), Inspired (to make new and different choices) and Going (to take action). She offers specific suggestions for making changes. For example, I now say aloud one thing I am grateful for every time I stop at a stop sign.

Many of us struggle with perfectionism, self-sufficiency, exhaustion and judgment. I recommend this book for those who want to believe that despite their flaws and shortcomings they are worthy of love and connection. It is a very brave book with ideas worthy of your consideration. I hope it is helpful to you!

— Missy Brown, LMSW

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by John M. Gottman and Nan Silver and Love Sense by Sue Johnson



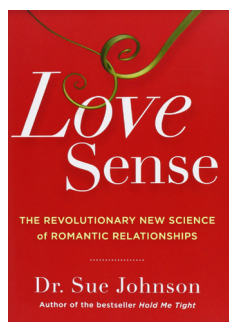
There are two books that I often recommend to couples who come to me for couples counseling: John Gottman's *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* and Sue Johnson's *Love Sense*. I enjoy both of these books because the concepts described are useful for couples, are accessible and easily understood and are based on scientific research. I also use John Gottman's book as required

reading for students taking my Intimate Relationships class at Western Michigan University.

In his book, Gottman describes his 40 years of research in which he scientifically studied relationships over time. He had newlywed couples spend a weekend at an apartment dubbed the "Love Lab" where he videotaped them managing conflict and coded their daily interactions. He collected physiological data for each couple, such as their heart rates and levels of stress hormones. Gottman collected this data from hundreds of couples through several long-term studies that lasted a decade or longer.

During this time, Gottman found strong behavioral patterns that differed between couples who ended up getting divorced and those who remained very happy together. His findings were so strong that he was able to predict which couples in his studies would get divorced with more than 90 percent accuracy. He found four behaviors to be strongly related to divorce: contempt, criticism, defensiveness and stonewalling. He also identified behavioral and thought patterns related to happy, healthy marriages and developed a model called the Sound Relationship House to describe these behaviors. This is a great book for anyone looking to better understand relationships.

Sue Johnson's *Love Sense* is another great resource for couples. Many people find love and relationships to be confusing,



especially when they are not going well. Johnson does a great job of describing the logic and emotions behind problematic relationship patterns by using dance metaphors. She describes the common Pursue-Withdraw pattern or "dance," where one person pursues and the other withdraws because they are sometimes feeling attacked. This withdrawing then

makes the pursuer want to pursue even more, which continues the cycle.

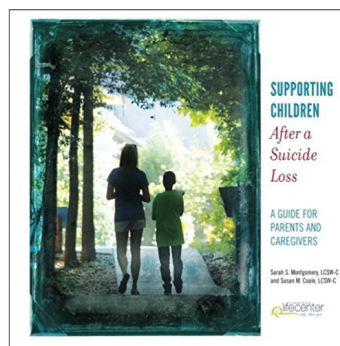
Johnson explains that how we bond with our parents as children has an impact on our adult romantic relationships. This is called attachment theory and is one of the key concepts described in detail in this book. Johnson does a great job of describing the science of love and attachment in a way that is understandable and useful. *Love Sense* can help couples understand and navigate difficult relationship patterns and move toward increased bonding with one another.

As a marriage and family therapist, I use both Gottman's and Johnson's models where appropriate to assist and support couples striving to improve their intimate relationships.

— Paul Hoskins, LPC, LLP, LMFT

Supporting Children After a Suicide Loss: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

by Sarah S. Montgomery and Susan M. Coale



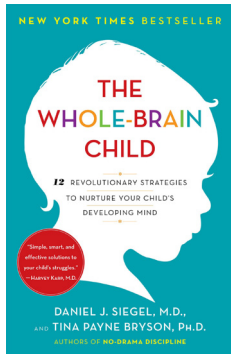
When a loved one dies by suicide, the grief experience is often complicated by many factors, including the sudden nature of the death and the many questions that remain, such as "Why?" and "How do I tell the children?" Society's mixed messages and cultural beliefs about suicide also add

to the confusion and distress. This book offers sound advice for adults and other caregivers who are helping children navigate the intense emotions after a suicide loss. I have found it very helpful in my work with grieving children, teens and families.

By helping the reader better understand the perspective of the child, the book acts as a gentle guide for how to share facts about the suicide death, and how to answer the natural questions that may follow. For example, adults who would normally tell their children the truth about life events may find themselves telling an alternative story to shield their children from the truth, believing that the child may not be able to cope with the facts.

Continued on page 4

The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson



Parenting is a journey that we often wish came with a guidebook. Many parents find themselves asking questions like: Am I empathizing without enabling? Am I spoiling or simply giving love? What are healthy boundaries? Should I give choices or should I make decisions for my child? Should I take things away when my child acts out?

Fortunately, parenting is now (a little bit) easier to navigate as doctors and researchers come together to add your child's brain development into the equation. In *The Whole-Brain Child*, Siegel and Bryson do a wonderful job of making neuroscience understandable while applying age-appropriate strategies that will build parent-child connections and can produce calmer, happier children.

The premise of *The Whole-Brain Child* is that we must integrate both sides of the brain when parenting. The thought is that we should first use strategies to help our kids manage the big emotions they are feeling (right brain) and then problem-solve potential solutions (left brain). As anyone who has tried to reason with a 3-year-old in mid-tantrum can understand, parenting is often an exercise in patience; this book helps you understand how a child's brain is wired and why and how to work with your child's brain from ages 0 to 12.

Parenting is not unlike teaching or coaching, and emotion coaching is described as a crucial element of parenting. The authors give 12 key strategies for coaching children to handle everyday struggles in ways that cultivate healthy emotional and intellectual development. For example, "Name it to tame it" encourages parents to support their children in telling stories about their emotions so that the left brain can process their experiences. These strategies have helped me become curious about my own child's behavior instead of jumping to conclusions and potentially missing an opportunity to guide and connect.

The book includes a "refrigerator sheet" that outlines What You Can Do and an Ages and Stages chart that are worth the book's price alone.

Perhaps even more exciting are the graphics with suggestions for talking to kids about the way their brains and bodies work. Teaching children at different age levels to take part in owning and handling their thoughts and feelings is one of the greatest gifts we can give them as parents. The graphics make it fascinat-

ing to read, so I found myself diving in and then modeling the examples with my child. At the book's suggestion, instead of asking her, "How was your day?" I asked, "What was the best part of your day?" "Did anything funny happen today?" "What was the worst part of your day?" "Did you feel sad or angry?"

Small changes like this opened my daughter up because I was appealing to the way her brain processes information instead of expecting her to fill in the dots of my vague "How was your day?" question. The more I talked about how her brain works and how thoughts and emotions come and go "like clouds," the more she felt empowered to handle them. Pretty. Awesome.

— Karen Oberhill, LPC, NCC

Supporting Children (from page 3)

"Parents are sometimes tempted to avoid the truth and make up another cause of death when telling the child," the authors write. "Children inevitably discover the truth, so although well-meaning, creating a non-true story is not helpful."

Age-appropriate suggestions on sharing factual information are offered for specific developmental stages, including young children, school-age children, tweens, teens and adults.

"Whatever information is shared should be factual, but does not need to be all of the information available," the authors write. "This foundation of truth can be added to or expanded upon in future conversations."

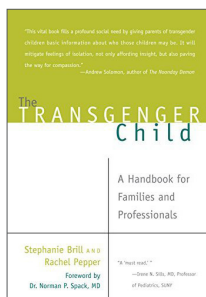
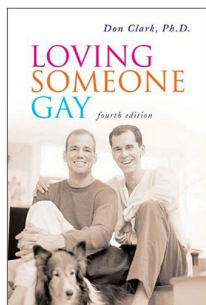
A question-and-answer section provides sample scripts for adults to begin answering questions commonly asked by children and teens.

If you know a child who lost someone special to suicide, consider reading this book to increase your confidence in helping the child to heal. Suicide is never an easy topic to discuss, and I wish I could say that this book makes it simpler to do so. Yet resources like this one can help to reframe a suicide loss so that eventually the focus can remain on the person's life, not just the manner in which they died. As the authors write: "Assure the youth that the cause of their loved one's death is a part of their story, but the cause of death is not the entire story, or even the most important part of their story."

Supporting Children After a Suicide Loss offers hope and encouragement for the grieving child or teen, as well as for the parent or caregiver.

— Julie Waldron, LLP, LPC

Loving Someone Gay by Don Clark and *The Transgender Child* by Stephanie A. Brill and Rachel Pepper



Recently I wrote an article for our CFPS website about the importance of being able to talk about gender identity and sexual orientation concerns, no matter how difficult it may be. Since then, I have been asked to recommend reading material for families who want to have dialogue but aren't sure how to get started. Two great books come to mind, although there are many others.

Don Clark's *Loving Someone Gay*, now in its fifth edition, covers a range of topics, beginning with what it means to be gay and the experience of growing up gay. Clark talks about the pressure to conform that comes from family and society and how challenging this can be to one's self-concept.

Coming out and exhibiting a positive self-image are also discussed. Shifting perspectives, the book then addresses how family and friends often feel when faced with a gay family member and goes on to talk about acceptance and the importance of good communication.

From there, Clark delves into various family relationships and the impact of sexual orientation on each of them. He dedicates the last portion of the book to individuals outside the family who may need guidance in working with, educating or providing services to a gay/lesbian/bisexual person. This book is an easy read

and approaches the subject in a compassionate, informed way.

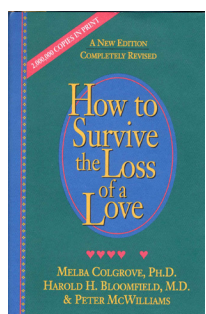
The Transgender Child is a very useful and practical book for families and professionals who are involved in some way with persons who identify as transgender or nonbinary. Authors Brill and Pepper draw upon years of their research and experience in the field to help parents and others deal with issues and questions unique to transgender children. They outline the stages that many children go through on their way to developing a gender identity while also considering those individuals who don't appear to follow a pattern, such as the adult who announces one day that they are "trans." The authors describe ways that parents and professionals can help support an individual on this journey in affirming and encouraging ways.

The book also helps parents figure out what to do with their own grief, guilt, anger and other emotions. Last, there is a section that discusses the processes that transgender persons often choose to go through in making their transition public or more formal, e.g., the use of hormone replacement therapies and gender-affirming surgeries.

These are tough topics for many people. I have met many families over the years who openly support the LGBTQ community "out there" but who struggle to cope with it when the challenge is within their own family. Both books offer practical advice from a researched backdrop and provide additional resources that can be helpful to families as they work through their feelings and strive to improve the relationships that are so valuable to them.

— Pamela Mairs, LLP

How to Survive the Loss of a Love by Melba Colgrove, Harold H. Bloomfield and Peter McWilliams



Losing someone you love is universally a gut-wrenching experience. The myriad of emotions is often more than one can bear. This book was written to offer comfort in the months and even years after a loss. It's written without a specific loss in mind and is appropriate for someone who is grieving a death, a divorce or any other kind of loss.

Part of the challenge of grieving is the struggle to focus, and the authors took this into consideration. This is not a book you read start to finish, but instead it's a compilation of thoughts and ideas, quotes, poems and points to ponder that help people cope and also to feel just a little bit less alone. Each "chapter" is just two pages long, and the format allows readers to skip around until they find something that speaks to them

in that moment and offers some relief.

I was first introduced to this book on a Red Cross Disaster Relief assignment. Pallets of donated copies of the book were given away to those who had lost so much. While this was decades ago, the book is every bit as relevant today as it was then. It's the kind of book that's not only been on my shelf for the whole of my career, but has been given away and replaced more times than I can count.

Its gentle insights are in no way a "how to" or "do this" type of instruction book as the title might suggest; it is instead a collection of "pearls of wisdom" on the human condition of grief and loss and getting through to tomorrow. It's a simple and inexpensive little book and it has helped millions to do just that.

— Patti Criswell, LMSW

CFPS STAFF

HOLIDAY TERRACE Kalamazoo

President: Larry Beer, EdD
Missy Brown, LPC, LMSW
Julie Carbajal, LLP, LLPC
Eileen Chaffee, PhD
Maureen Corts, LMSW
Patti Criswell, LMSW
Dave Fatzinger, EdD
Jennifer Gruel, LPC
Linnea Halfvarson, LLP, LPC
Nancy Hein, LMSW
Kim Hiatt, LLP
Paul Hoskins, LPC, LLP, LMFT
Brian Johnson, LLP
Jenny Kindt, LLP
Sarah Krussell, LPC, LLP
Orianne Lemay, LMSW
Emily Lindsay, LLPC, TLLP
Pamela Mairs, LLP
Pam Marx, LPC, LMFT
Ann Muntter, LMSW
Jessica Niland, LPC
Bridget Nolan, LLP, LPC
Karen Oberhill, LPC
Jane O'Grady, LMFT, LLP, LPC
Tami Parke, LLP, LPC
Kristina Raleigh, LLPC
Robert Schram, LLP
Ann Sluyter, LMSW
Janeé Steele, PhD, LPC
Cindy VanderWee, LLMSW
Dawn Vollink, LMSW
Mary Zirpoli, EdD

E. CENTRE AVENUE Portage

Codirector: Abbie VanDerWege, PhD
Codirector: Jeff Chicoski, LMSW
Janice Feller, LPC
Erica Gergely, PhD
Gordon Hare, PhD
Sheri Heflin, LLP
Shannon Hilton-Smith, LLP
Chad Muffley, LLP
Julie Waldron, LLP, LPC

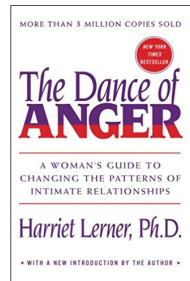
BUSINESS OFFICE

Practice Manager: Nikki McGruder

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Cindy Beer

The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships by Harriet Lerner



It is natural for us to fall into patterns in our relationships, whether with friends, family or coworkers. When certain patterns do not feel comfortable to us, we may feel anger, resentment or unhappiness. *The Dance of Anger* simply and clearly describes how we can change our part in those patterns — our steps in the dance — in a kind and respectful way.

Since most of our relationships are with people we care for or even love, we don't want to be strident, demanding or hurtful when making positive change. Rather, we can make intentional changes to improve our situation by focusing on problem-solving in caring, respectful ways for all parties involved.

Lerner helps us see why we each need to take responsibility for changing the dance patterns for ourselves. This is not because we are selfish, but because we are the ones who know if a piece of our relationship does not work well for us, and because we are the ones who are responsible for figuring out what might work better. Others can't read our minds. It is up to us to share with others how we feel and how we would like the patterns in our relationship to change. We can't control others, only ourselves. Therefore, we need to be ready to change our steps in the dance, our responses in the patterns, so we don't keep perpetuating a relationship pattern that is not healthy for us.

In *The Dance of Anger*, Lerner offers clear, short vignettes to demonstrate how these ideas play out in real-life situations. The vignettes can be used as models as we figure out ways to improve situations in our own relationships. She also reminds us that just because we suggest or ask for something from another person doesn't mean they have to change. Nor do we have to figure out what to do to make them change; they need to decide for themselves whether and how to change.

The Dance of Anger offers clear and respectful ways to improve our important relationships by changing our part in relationship patterns so that the whole relationship dance can improve.

— Nancy Hein, LMSW

CHILD & FAMILY PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, P.C.

We are a diverse group of psychologists, counselors and social workers with expertise treating a wide range of concerns. In a caring, comfortable setting, we serve clients of all ages through individual, couple, family and group counseling. We also offer psychological evaluations and testing services.

Among our areas of specialization are depression, anxiety, stress management, parenting, loss and grief, transitions, relationships, adolescent issues, self-esteem, trauma, behavioral issues, eating disorders, LGBTQ+ concerns and addictions. For a complete list of our therapists and their areas of expertise, as well as a list of our therapy groups, visit our website at childandfamilypsych.com.

To make an appointment to see a therapist at either our Kalamazoo or Portage location, please call our business office at (269)372-4140. Our support staff will be happy to work with you in choosing an appropriate therapist based on your needs and preferences.

KALAMAZOO OFFICE 5340 Holiday Terrace, Kalamazoo, MI 49009

PORTAGE OFFICE 1662 E. Centre Avenue, Portage, MI 49002

BUSINESS OFFICE Phone: (269)372-4140 Fax: (269)372-0390


Child & Family Psychological Services, P.C.