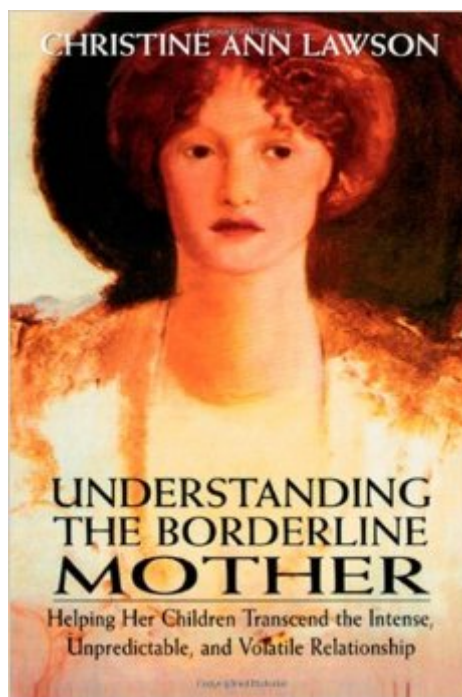


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# Understanding The Borderline Mother: Helping Her Children Transcend The Intense, Unpredictable, And Volatile Relationship



## Synopsis

The first love in our lives is our mother. Recognizing her face, her voice, the meaning of her moods, and her facial expressions is crucial to survival. Dr. Christine Ann Lawson vividly describes how mothers who suffer from borderline personality disorder produce children who may flounder in life even as adults, futilely struggling to reach the safety of a parental harbor, unable to recognize that their borderline parent lacks a pier, or even a discernible shore. Four character profiles describe different symptom clusters that include the waif mother, the hermit mother, the queen mother, and the witch. Children of borderlines are at risk for developing this complex and devastating personality disorder themselves. Dr. Lawson's recommendations for prevention include empathic understanding of the borderline mother and early intervention with her children to ground them in reality and counteract the often dangerous effects of living with a "make-believe" mother. Some readers may recognize their mothers as well as themselves in this book. They will also find specific suggestions for creating healthier relationships. Addressing the adult children of borderlines and the therapists who work with them, Dr. Lawson shows how to care for the waif without rescuing her, to attend to the hermit without feeding her fear, to love the queen without becoming her subject, and to live with the witch without becoming her victim. A Jason Aronson Book

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have to laugh when I survey some of the critical reviews below, which claim this book is "imaginative literature" or is unhelpful because it has a "negative view" of borderline mothers. I can

only conclude that anyone who finds this book overly imaginative or negative did not have the pleasure of growing up under the reign of terror inflicted by a mother with a rip-roaring personality disorder. I don't to this day know if my mother was a pathological narcissist or a high-functioning borderline of the type Lawson describes as "Queen" and "Witch" (despite the detractors, she is very careful to say that these terms describe symptom clusters, not individuals, and that any borderline can veer between all four of her loosely labeled types). It does not matter, as in practice there is almost nothing to choose between the two disorders and (psychiatry being an inexact science) we may learn there is no hard distinction. Like narcissists, the less self-blaming types of borderline - as Lawson points out - are in denial about the notion that they might have a serious defect. They are not going to assume responsibility, or seek treatment unless it is a way to get attention and reinforce victim status without coming to grips with their own conduct. I spent - wasted - twenty years of my adult life believing that the mother who had made me miserable for the previous twenty could somehow be communicated with, humanized, and redeemed. Why she made her husband and child so miserable - and why no amount of accommodation on the part of either had any helpful effect - remained a mystery until I first read about malignant narcissism and borderline disorder. Complete validation of what we went through had to wait until I read this book. Far from simply seeming insightful because it "reminds us of people we know," as one carping reviewer says below, this book made sense of my life. As for the complaint that the book villainizes mothers, I find that connecting the dots, which no other book has done for me so far - even those billed as self-help - actually makes it possible for me to feel some compassion for my mother, who behaved in ways that make compassion virtually impossible. Children of mothers with a severe personality disorder are, as Lawson says, nearly as helpless as prisoners in concentration camps. Their emotional Hell is concealed from a world that sees only the facade and wonders what is wrong with the child; no one grasps the uncertainty, chronic negation and lack of support they endure - because their mothers are incapable of giving what they do not have. Lawson's accounts, drawn from the literature and her clinical experience, not only echo but explain what I have witnessed. They also explain why I escaped without becoming totally dysfunctional - because there were a few sane adults who made connections with me. The moral obligation of witnesses to protect and help children of these mothers is the most urgent message of this book; it is the only text I have encountered that describes the desperation of their - our - predicament. Sufferers from severe BPD are just that, and I am as sorry for their unhappiness as I am for any misfortune, but what happens to their children is the equivalent of a natural disaster, and a preventable one. This book is invaluable both to people involved in the moment with a borderline mother who has custody of minor children, and to the

grown children of such women. In a society that still mystifies motherhood and in which children are increasingly isolated with their mothers, it ought to be required reading for anyone who gives a damn about their fellow man.

This book is a lifeline to sanity for any child of a mother who suffers from borderline personality disorder. The first chapters dissect this complex disease more thoroughly than I've read in any other book, and the final section explains how to cope with the volatile relationships that form between mother and child. Every page contains a wealth of information that is simultaneously therapeutic and proactive. The validation that came with being able to relate to the experiences of other children living with this was priceless (as well as being long overdue). I have read dozens of books about borderline personality disorder, but none (until now) addressed the consequences the disease has on children of mothers suffering from the disorder. The book seems to focus on the relationships daughters have with their borderline mothers, but does deal with the impact it has on sons, as well.

I need to add myself to this growing list of people who are praising this amazing book. If you find yourself questioning your relationship with your mother, or think there "might be something wrong with her, but I just don't know what it is," BUY and READ this book immediately. I found myself at such a crossroads wanting to believe that there was something tangibly wrong with my mom other than she was "just a bit- -." This book exploded my awareness. Furthermore in sharing it with my siblings it created a life-changing awareness shift in all of us. I went back to read something in the book after I had lent it to my brother and was shocked to find that he, like I had underlined and written comments in the book such as "OH MY GOD I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS HAPPENED TO SOMEONE ELSE!" or "HOLY CR- -, MOM SAID THIS SAME EXACT THING." We who have been raised by someone with this mental illness NEED to come to grips that we are NOT alone, we are NOT crazy, it is NOT our fault. This book does this and more. To some of the "negative" comments or "shortcomings" about this book in previous reviews...no this book is not the end all and does not offer "the answer" to solve the Borderline's or the Children's issues....that is not it's goal. It's goal is to very accurately describe and validate experiences we have been through so that WE and others can appreciate what we've been through. This is necessary before the healing can begin. I recommend this book to people questioning their mother's illness. I recommend this book to people who know and are dealing with the fact that their mother suffers from BPD. I recommend this book to any therapist who is treating someone who has or was raised by a BPD. This is a phenomenal piece of work!

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