

The viewpoint of parents on childraising is even put – a rarely considered issue – when it is pointed out that “It’s arguably the hardest and most important job in the world, yet no one ever teaches us to become parents. Many people just aren’t equipped or ready for parenting, whether because of illness, addictions, neglectful or abusive temperaments.” (p.123). So there you have it – parents are people too.

Change is not presented as easy or as a guarantee of acceptance. Many counsellors will enjoy the descriptions of the ‘yes but...’ games on p.185. While these are devastatingly accurate, the tone is gentle enough to allow players a certain recognition – and who has not played a ‘yes but’ game from time to time ? The underlying point is that you may recognise that you need to change but arriving at the point of commitment is quite another thing.

In this most unusual book pain and conflict, like stress, are shown for what they are; part of life. Sooner or later this will happen to everyone and the kindest thing you can do for someone in pain is help them to accept this and try to give them the strength and skills to deal with it or to endure it. The descriptions of the role of grief in recovery are very moving. It is clear, however, that this phase will not last forever, yet it must be gone through to overcome the pain. People are shown as avoiding grieving for understandable reasons, yet it’s gently pointed out that “Unless we *intervene* in our lives nothing changes.” (p. 258).

Having debunked the idea of the perfect family of origin, Ms. Ferguson goes on to question the necessity for the perfect relationship – why do we want one ? “It can help to detach from any obsessiveness to ask ourselves what else we’d do with our lives if our ideal relationship didn’t come along.” (p. 265). If this sort of questioning catches on, it will end numerous TV dramas and liberate many women from the constant pursuit of the ‘steady relationship’ and the ‘perfect man’ !

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