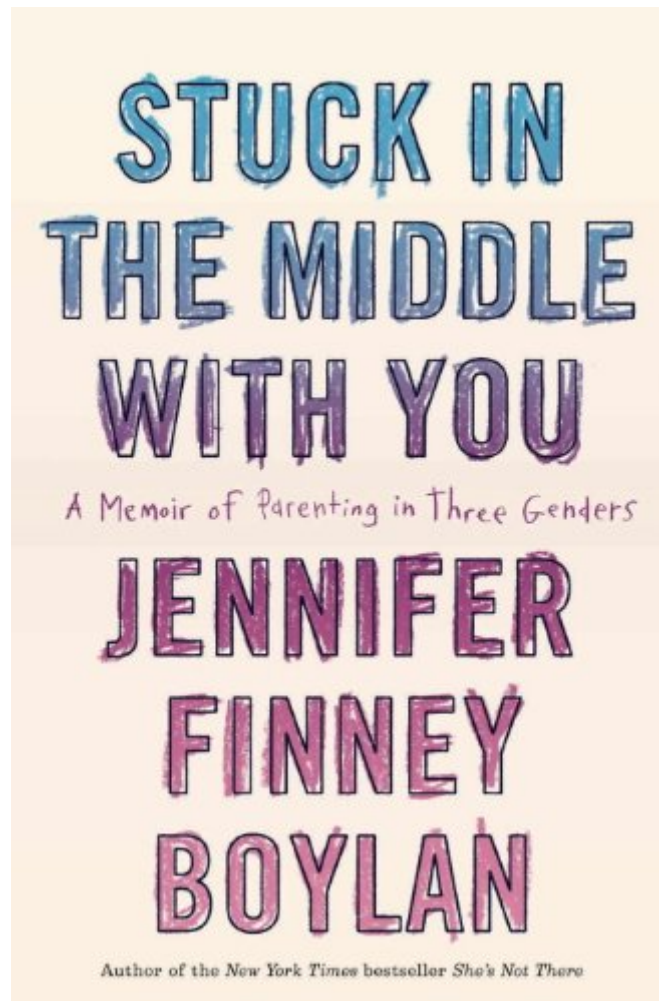


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Stuck In The Middle With You: A Memoir Of Parenting In Three Genders



Synopsis

New York Times bestselling author Jennifer Finney Boylan returns with a remarkable memoir about gender and parenting that discusses how families are shaped and the difficulties and wonders of being human. A father for six years, a mother for ten, and for a time in between, neither, or both, Jennifer Finney Boylan has seen parenthood from both sides of the gender divide. When her two children were young, Boylan came out as transgender, and as Jenny transitioned from a man to a woman and from a father to a mother, her family faced unique challenges and questions. In this thoughtful, tear-jerking, hilarious memoir, Jenny asks what it means to be a father, or a mother, and to what extent gender shades our experiences as parents. Through both her own story and incredibly insightful interviews with others, including Richard Russo, Edward Albee, Ann Beattie, Augusten Burroughs, Susan Minot, Trey Ellis, Timothy Kreider, and more, Jenny examines relationships between fathers, mothers, and children; people's memories of the children they were and the parents they became; and the many different ways a family can be. With an Afterword by Anna Quindlen, *Stuck in the Middle with You* is a brilliant meditation on raising "and on being" a child. Now with Extra Libris material, including a reader's guide and bonus content

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Based on the title and blurbs, I expected this book to provide insights into how parenting is different for someone who is dealing with transgender issues. What it ended up being was sweet, sentimental, lightweight, and inconsistent. Boylan absolutely has a humanistic and gentle outlook on life which is reflected in how she frames her experiences. This is not a person given to harshness or anger, or at least not inclined to share that aspect of her personality much. There are actually two parts to the book, though they are interspersed such that they aren't really presented as separate entities. There are Boylan's reminiscences, about both the distant and recent past, and then there are interviews with other successful and accomplished people who share their memories of their fathers and how those experiences shaped their personalities and parenting choices. The interviews could be added dimension to the book, but they end up feeling like padding. Perhaps if she had looked outside of her circle of friends and acquaintances to locate people who had bigger hardship and challenges, the interviews may have kept my interest. As it was, I gave up on them pretty fast. Part of the problem is that the interviews appear to largely be transcribed close to verbatim rather than their content being gleaned and possibly analyzed for meaning and focus. They feel like languid trips down each subject's memory lane. Most of these trips are neither remarkable nor especially enlightening. I'm not sure what the point of them is, but I wanted to skip them after reading the first one. I just didn't care about stories about the average parents of successful people.

Frankly I was put off by the opening encounter between the author and an unhappy woman improbably named "Grenadine". Both were attending their children's fencing match when Grendadin complained that her husband, a soldier, again deployed in Iraq, had changed and was no longer the man she married. I must say I was not surprised, thinking PTSD. How could someone not be changed after being placed in a hostile Middle Eastern country where the inflexible populace not only approve of violence and hatred, they embrace it? How could you not change when every moment of your existence you are wondering whether it would be the last? I was expecting the author, a transexual who certainly knows a lot about extreme change, to offer words of wisdom, encouragement and hope. Instead she gloated about how her unconventional household with two brilliant boys and an understanding wife fared in comparison to a "normal" family. Of course Grenadine's brutish son was besting a smaller, more delicate child. So it seems that while the author demands understanding, acceptance and admiration, the great unwashed are undeserving of the same consideration. The book has a breezy tone and deals with the author's life, pre and post transition. According to her, the reception of her change was nothing less than idyllic. The kids were

unaffected and not bullied or badgered in school. The only issues the kids had were unrelated to the unconventional family unit: the younger child hated his math teacher and the older one was unfairly punished for an innocent but misguided joke. The friends and family members that disapproved eventually rejoined the fold and her spouse, employer, colleagues and community were all supportive. The author seems self centered and a bit selfish. It is all about her.

Jenny Boylan has done it again! She has written another very thoughtful and powerful book about her life as a transgender woman and includes her most current updates on her growth and development within her lovely family in this delightful memoir. I have read all of her books, and I must say that she always delivers. Her books are well written, thoughtful and very relevant to the changing environment of what the nuclear "family" is truly becoming. This time she includes numerous personal interviews with a variety of different people. At first I thought these interviews might detract from reading about her and her life, but she magically intertwines the subject topics with the interviews. Which actually for me results in a more intimate portrayal of herself as a woman, mother and friend. Some of the interviews are intense, while some are very funny and light. Some are with famous individuals and others are interviews with close friends of Jenny's. I also thoroughly enjoyed ALL the wonderful stories about her two boys, Sean and Zach. There is no doubt the love she has for both her children and her partner Deirdre. The warmth, love and humor that is throughout this book is what anyone who is contemplating becoming transgender really needs to know is possible. Some people will accept you, but those that really love you, will ALWAYS love you. No matter what. That is the beauty of this book. That is how Jenny writes, and how she lives her life. In the final interview Jenny and Deirdre are interviewed by the author and Pulitzer Prize winner, Anna Quindlen. The interview is sweet, reflective and very humorous. Jenny also gives out her personal email address in the book for those who have questions about becoming transgender.

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