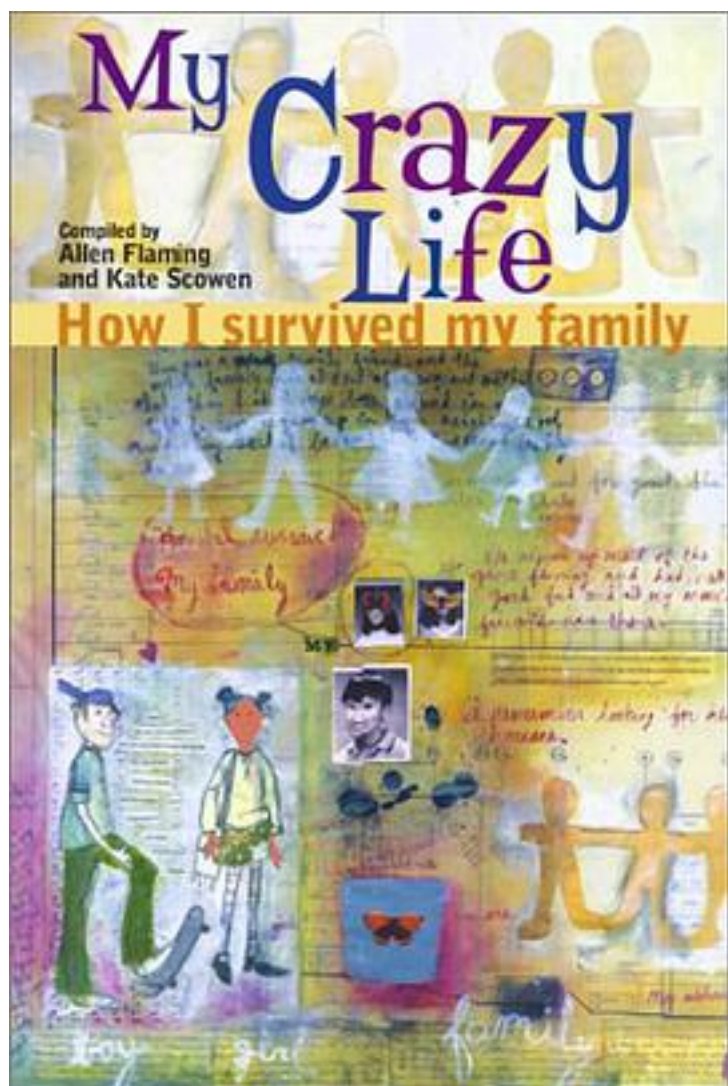


My Crazy Life



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There's always the light. It's definitely hard to see when you're going through stuff. I thought I was really alone, but now I've heard so many people talking about all the hard things in their lives, and then they discovered the light. So just keep fighting. - Samantha

It's difficult to estimate the number of kids who grow up in dysfunctional families, but we can say with certainty that the numbers are not small. So what is life really like for these kids? What does it mean to grow up in a family where alcoholism plays a role in the family dynamic, where parental separation and all the emotional baggage that accompanies the dissolution of a marriage -- especially where kids are involved -- hangs like a cloud over daily life? What does it feel like when the adult members of a family are too preoccupied or self-absorbed to really act as parents? In each of these situations, and others, it is usually the teen who has to assume an inordinate amount of responsibility. It means he or she has to grow up very quickly while struggling to maintain stability as forces are pushing in the other direction. Here are the voices of ten teens who have experienced these situations first-hand. But these are not stories of despair. What you will hear are the authentic voices of youth talking about coping and surviving. One story describes how a teen girl found strength through friendships and by reexamining her sibling relationships. One who was abused by an alcoholic father tells how her commitment to art and the sympathy of a teacher gave value to her life. These are stories that will resonate with young people. This is a chance for those who struggle in their own dysfunctional settings to realize that they are not alone, that there is hope. An Afterword by a health professional serves as a helpful reference guide for youth who wish to seek professional help and guidance.

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目录:

[My Crazy Life_下载链接1_](#)

标签

评论

[My Crazy Life_下载链接1_](#)

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