



Cracked: Putting Broken Lives Together Again

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Dr. Drew Pinsky is best known as the cohost of the long-running radio advice program Loveline. But his workday is spent at a major Southern California clinic, treating the severest cases of drug dependency and psychiatric breakdown. In this riveting book, Pinsky reveals the intimate and often shocking stories of his patients as they struggle with emotional trauma, sexual abuse, and a host of chemical nemeses: alcohol, marijuana, Ecstasy, heroin, speed, cocaine, and prescription drugs. At the center of these stories is Pinsky himself, who immerses himself passionately, almost obsessively, in his work. From the sexually compulsive model to the BMW-driving soccer mom, Cracked exposes, in fast-moving, powerful vignettes, the true scope and severity of addiction, a nationwide epidemic.

Cracked: Putting Broken Lives Together Again Details

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From Reader Review Cracked: Putting Broken Lives Together Again for online ebook

CD says

A creepy book. Honest. But still creepy.

There is much brutal honesty about the details of withdrawal in the preliminary stages of drug and alcohol rehab. There is no sympathy given to those who make the addicts condition worse by enabling the self destructive behaviors. The book is too clinical and any truth to be found is in the form of self revelation and confession on the part of the author.

The extent that Doctor Drew Pinsky goes to in explaining his background and resultant motivation combined with how at the time of this book he responds to a number of his patients is what is creepy. If there was not a clinical detachment, his desire to rescue many of his patients could create as many problems as it might even vaguely hope to help.

The sub title of Putting Broken Lives Together Again seems to be wishful thinking. There is little actual putting lives back together. It is more of "Well it happened somehow"! Rehab does keep people alive potentially long enough for healing to begin or have a chance. Sometimes. Other times it doesn't work. There is a bit more criticism of 'other' forms of treatment than the one described in this book than is professional or is warranted. If the form that is outlined is so much better, it isn't quantified in any way. The book edges along being a hard sell pitch for this type of drug rehab.

There is nothing in the book that should make anyone doubt drug and alcohol problems are severe and deadly. There is a lot to admire and expect in basic support of the diseased on their way to health. In fact one of the clearer and most succinct definitions of mental health in print is encompassed in less than a paragraph in this book. Yes, there are a few plus or worthwhile bits. Mostly though it goes slightly over the edge of the darkness of the primary subject to a realm where we/I/you don't want to be.

If a potential reader has listened to the syndicated radio show "Loveline" or sat squirmingly through MTV's "Celebrity Rehab", then this book will clarify some small corners of those two experiences.

Not really recommend other than for those looking for some background on Pinsky and his operations in Pasadena, California.

Jenn says

This was an intriguing book. I really enjoyed how Dr. Pinsky detailed the habits, behaviors, and details of his patients' experiences, and the role he played in trying to help them recover. He isn't without compassion, and it is clear that the work he undertakes affects him very deeply. He really knows that connection is one of the key parts of the doctor-patient relationship that facilitates recovery on many levels, and in this book he gives examples of how he keeps at it, even when it seems that all hope is lost. That kind of dedication and personal connection, while setting boundaries and clearly defining expectations, is exactly what the people he treats need. Connection with someone who is dedicated to helping might be the key thing that saves people. I did notice, as others have mentioned, that he seems biased in favor of female addicts, and more affected by their suffering, but he admits that himself, which is refreshing.

Dr. Pinsky is truly committed to what he does and to the patients he treats, and he knows what a complex and often unsolvable problem he is addressing. What bothers me most is that he often seems to be irrationally invested in the belief that the 12-step AA plan will work for everyone, under every circumstance. And that's where I take issue. Everyone is unique. Every experience is unique. But Dr. Pinsky seems to think that every person who is an addict or addicted must undertake the same steps that AA prescribes in order to "recover" even though he himself admits that finding a "higher power" in his own experience is an elusive thing that is really hit-or-miss. Sure, there are some things that everyone must confront or go through, but on an individual level, going through generic prescribed steps just isn't that simple and doesn't always lead to resolution. If it was that easy, then Dr. Pinsky and AA would be able to make everything all better with their one-size-fits-all approach for anyone who undertakes it. Clearly, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work, and even Dr. Pinsky mourns and grieves when one of his patients is lost to follow up, or ends up dead. He rightfully questions himself, the care he has provided, the "system" in general, and what he could have done to lead to a better outcome.

As Dr. Pinsky himself points out, life is often a series of problems. How you handle those problems is the more important predictor of outcome than the problems themselves. Some people look back and can only see suffering and trauma, while others look back and see triumph over adversity. Some people struggle with addiction, and others don't. Clearly, the cause isn't as simple as Dr. Pinsky would have us believe. The solution is even more elusive. And even Dr. Pinsky acknowledges that the solution is so complex and elusive that even the most experienced, dedicated, and compassionate doctors cannot count on any guarantee of success, despite their best efforts and fervent hopes to make things better.

Kudos for Dr. Pinsky for his determination and dedication, even if he is rigidly and unreasonably committed to a one-size-fits-all approach to recovery.

Susan says

After seeing Dr. Drew on Celebrity Rehab, I was interested to learn more about him. This book details a few months in the life of the rehab unit where he is the medical director. It is an extremely honest book in terms of the science behind addiction, the experiences of patients in his program, and about his own personal issues and how they affect his work. It is interesting to see his personal development and how he is changed because of interactions with his patients. I also appreciated his views on society and on insurance and the impact of both on society. In reading other reviews, it seems like some people find him too self congratulatory in this book, but I see it more as just feeling good about the successes he has in the face of the odds against people actually sustaining sobriety.

Patty says

Dr. Drew does a nice job of using real-life examples of patients going through substance abuse detox. It flows quickly as you see the different reactions (and defense mechanisms) of those going through addiction and recovery. I did feel that there were some things missing, though. For example, I would have liked to see different sections on the whole recovery process, rather than just the detox stage. There is very little about what happens during group sessions, or the recovery after leaving the treatment program. Also, since I think this is a great book for non-addicts to learn more about what addicted friends and relatives go through, I believe a section on co-dependency, enabling and other issues should be addressed - since, as Dr. Drew often says, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." I believe many friends and relatives of addicts need clear-cut guidance on how they can truly help the addicted out of their behavior, rather than

contributing to the problem.

I also think Pinsky could interview former addicts and put their comments in the book - such as what worked for them, when their "aha" moment came, what friends and relatives did/didn't do to be helpful.

I hope he re-releases some form of this book with more detail, since I think it would help many who are friends and relatives of addicts.

Derrick says

I appreciated this candid and honest discussion of Dr. Drew's daily life. I can completely relate to the author, but it was interesting that I found myself relating to the patients as well. Addiction can be a powerful force, and finding the ways to cope with the problems and pain that lead to addiction are important to us all. Not to minimize the effects of withdrawal, but the pain these recovering addicts go through does relate to the challenges we face daily to try to achieve our goals.

The other thing Drew attributes to the rise of addition is the immediate gratification that is so pervasive in today's culture. Amazing to think that a few generations ago the only "On-Demand" programming that most people had were books. Then came records, and personal music players, then videos and personal screens and cell phones and internet. I can totally see how people can burn themselves out with all of the stimuli that surround them.

Kevin Veighey says

"Cracked" is a fantastic book that gives the general public a behind-the-scenes look at how a drug rehab clinic is run and the harsh realities of everything an addict goes through on the road to sobriety. Best of all, it's all from the point of view of the book's author: Dr. Drew Pinsky, host of the nationally-syndicated radio show Loveline.

After finishing it for the first time, I immediately began to read it again from the beginning. There are very few books that make me do that, but this one was so good I had to read it again because of the vivid imagery Dr. Drew conjures so wonderfully of what he goes through every single day on the job.

Warning: I feel you should be at least 18 before you read this, as there's strong adult language in this, as well as other things that may be inappropriate for younger readers. Even if you don't listen to Loveline, "Cracked" is a good read for those who are interesting in recovering from addiction, or those who are interested in how a rehab clinic really works. I virtually guarantee you'll be thoroughly engrossed by Dr. Drew's insight about the world of addicts.

Liam says

Drew means well. Anyone who's got a familiarity with the ACE network, Loveline, HLN, or the zillion reality shows can see that. And this is Drew doing his work "where the rubber meets the road" as he's fond of saying. So while it's interesting as a look behind the man both on the job and at home, CRACKED is best taken as a summation of Drew's feelings and beliefs re: addiction treatment. And it's a real shock to those of us who either don't have more than a passing acquaintance with addiction, or perhaps find some of this material unsettlingly familiar, as I did. Regardless, it's not a compelling read line by line, but the hurt and the

nerves and the toil that comes through is an effective and striking reminder how much addiction destroys, how fucked up our cultural and bureaucratic approaches to addiction are, and how fighting the good fight is rarely glamorous, often crushing, but necessary.

Estie says

This book was ok. The writing put me off at first because it is colloquial and juvenile and can be insulting to your intelligence if you are intelligent. If you are not intelligent you might like the fact that it is an easy read. The redeeming feature of this book is the content and that is what kept me reading. It is a first hand account of a rehab facility from the point of view of the doctor. I appreciated getting an inside view of the facility and learning about the ordeals that addicts go through. The author covers some pretty heavy issues which I found thought provoking and sometimes disturbing. Overall I recommend the book because I found that it opened up my eyes a little bit to issues I had previously not thought much about.

Kate says

I liked this book better than Dr. Drew's newer book, *The Mirror Effect: How Celebrity Narcissism Is Seducing America*. This was written before any of the rehab shows. I thought it would be entirely about addiction, but mostly it seemed like "a year in the life" or a memoir. Dr. Drew highlights a few cases at the rehab center, illustrating the different types of addiction and how different patients react to rehab - for some patients it works, while for others it takes several more stays in rehab to get the message. For others, it is fatal. He also talks about his own past and his personal issues that make him a person who tries to save everyone, and there's also a little about Loveline and the role of physical & sexual abuse and other childhood traumas and their role in creating an addict.

This was very enlightening considering that my brother went through a period of addiction (he's doing okay now, but I think we all still fear that he will relapse). I always thought of it as an inability to control oneself, but apparently there is a definite biological connection for addicts which explains why they are unable to stop even though they are aware that using drugs will make their lives worse and/or kill them.

The only thing that really bothered me about this book were the illustrations. Creepy old children's book illustrations of Humpty Dumpty at the beginning of each chapter. It was weird and while I understand the connection to helping addicts, those picture were pretty disturbing.

Jeanne says

Dr. Drew is entertaining even when he is writing about the difficult subject of addiction. This book was an eye opener.

Lesley Henderson says

I probably enjoyed this book because Dr. Drew fascinates me, from his work on Loveline to his reality rehab shows on VH1. As a mental health professional myself, I'm amazed at how attuned he is to any slight sign of

abuse or trauma in people, even when they are asking some seemingly benign (or kooky) question on Loveline. Nice to know that some MD's either take counseling classes or have some intuition about interpersonal relationships! Anyway, this was a good read, and I hasten to say "enjoyable" because reading about struggling addicts should not be compared with terms that also describe a walk in the park. It was both engaging and hard to read at times, and I think I learned something. Well worth my time.

Ira Therebel says

I read this book first when it came out, about a decade ago, and I absolutely loved it. Reading it now as a more knowledgeable and wiser person I had different (very mixed) feelings.

My main problem with this book is the incredible simplification of addiction issue. This is often done, people paint it all with one big brush making everyone who has a problem with drugs look like part of a well defined formula. But how can it be when he can't even point the finger on why some get realization and others don't? I am not the biggest fan of 12 step programs which he promotes. Not because they don't help anyone, they sure do, but because they don't help everyone and yet are promoting the idea of addiction being so alike in everyone, that everyone got it for the same reasons and that everyone should go the same way to fight it. While I am sure that some people are indeed powerless, I don't see it as being the case for everybody.

Same goes for what starts addiction. While it sure isn't far fetched that it often comes from some trauma, Dr. Pinsky doesn't bother to give us different examples on what that traumatic experience can be. He sticks to being abused as a child story. I am not sure why he does it. Maybe it is just to make it simpler for the reader? But this is what ruins the book in many ways. A traumatic experience can be of different kinds. And sometimes they don't even happen in the early childhood, or are sexual. Sometimes it can even happen in the childhood but not because of abusive parents, parents can be the most loving caring and perfect but something that they can't prevent can shake the world of the kid and cause problems in psychological development (for example, witnessing death). With Dr. Drew it seems he answers that someone was abused as a kid for the patient, simply preassuming it based on his own bias.

Another thing is that he is pretty sexist. In one part of the book he talks how women need emotions while society is expecting them to be sexual in a way that 17 year old boys are. Hmmm no, Dr. Drew....society expects us to need emotions while shaming us for simple sexual impulses (aka the way 17 year old boys are) which is also the reason that pushes so many women into repressed sexuality, which he sees as natural and ideal. This also shows some huge bias he has at work. To him every woman is a sexual victim while men are predators. Female patients that try to use sexuality to manipulate him are not at fault, they were just abused and don't know what they are doing. Male patients hitting on women on the other hand are horrible human beings knowingly using it to hurt others. Male and female patient hooking up is the fault of the male patient while the female is once again a helpless victim. This attitude seems to be very harmful to me, both in regards to males and females, he just seems to have a very outdated view.

This goes for many issues. I found his opinions on our culture of instant gratification to be interesting, but yet flawed. The guy is obviously a traditionalist and conservative. Not trying to use it as an insult. But he seems to be comparing our times to some "good old days" that never existed. He says that a stable relationship of any kind is important for recovery process. I absolutely agree with him. But then he goes saying that in our time people are unable to maintain stable relationships (as couples, not as friends) and this is wrong. While there are more divorces, less couples who have been together for 70 years etc this is not because of the inability of keeping a relationship, it is because of the fact that we are not forced to be in one. Back in the days many people maintained a relationship, even a toxic one, because they had no other choice. They got married fresh out of high school and stayed there. Our society is still great at maintaining

relationships, but has the privilege of being able to keep only the ones who benefit us. And it is not like before there were no addictions, it is just that they were kept quiet, seen as more shameful and now people finally give a damn to give help. It is like with rape, people are not raped more these days, they just don't stay quiet as much.

What I did like about this book is the honesty. He openly talks about his personal flaws and insecurities in his work field. He does acknowledge his bias about female patients. He talks about his feelings of frustrations and anger when it comes to issues with patients. He is a real person right there saying it all the way he sees it.

I saw some reviews accusing him of being too narcissistic, I disagree. HE definitely wants to help people. This is the reason why one would go to work in this field and stick with it. And him talking on how him trying so hard to be a "rescuer" was a problem is not seen by me as a tribute to himself, he does acknowledge it as a flaw and an obstacle to success.

I am not rating Dr. Drew or his general work. I am aware that he is an addiction specialist. And while I see the system as being still very flawed these days (like being too general on all addicts) his opinions are very valuable since he is involved in this area for many years. But the book, while an easy read is written too clumsily by oversimplifying the whole issue and people affected. So while I loved the book as his memoir, to see the experiences of a doctor with his particular worldview, I was also pretty disappointed in it as a good portrayal of addiction. So to me this book is in the "ok" category.

Ally Hunter says

I know, Dr. Drew is a little hokey these days with his "celebrity" status. But, once upon a time he wrote a great book on addiction and this is it. I recently lost a friendship to addiction and I decided to re-read this book. Through the stories of different patients you learn about both the biology and psychology of addiction and, sadly, the destruction addiction can afflict on lives. I recognized my friend in so many of Dr. Drew's patients....male or female, young or old, rich or poor, educated or ignorant....which leaves the undeniable truth that addiction is a disease. A mental illness with common characteristics and unavoidable, devastating truths. A good book to help those with an addict in their lives.

Heidi says

Apparently Drew Pinsky is famous; he's got a radio show. I had never heard of him before picking up the book (I liked the cover) but long-time fans might get more out of this. Pinsky is a doctor at an inpatient rehab clinic, so he's the guy who prescribes the medication that severe addicts will need to get through withdrawals. As a compassionate guy, Pinsky would like to save everyone who walks through his doors, but he's seen enough to know that most of them are going to return to their drug(s) of choice sooner or later.

The stories Pinsky tells are intense and sad. He hears more than his fair share of tales about horrific childhoods and violent lives. He's adamant that addiction can't be treated merely with drugs, but also that Western society isn't providing opportunities for people to recover. Indeed, Western society (according to Dr. Drew) is what's wrong with the world.

The book jumps back and forth a fair amount; one minute he's talking about treating a woman for heroin addiction and the next minute we're discussing 12-year-olds having sex. Pinsky is not in a position to tell long, revealing stories about his patients, partly because of confidentiality and partly because he only sees them for a maximum of 28 days (usually much less because insurance companies deny treatment after a few days). I suppose that's why he skips around so much, but it would have helped me pay better attention if he had picked one thought and stuck with it for a chapter or two.

Pinsky offers no solutions. None. The title suggests that he has some ideas for combating addiction, but it's misleading. Only one of the patients Pinsky profiled ended up recovering to any extent at all, and Pinsky had no idea why this man had succeeded where so many had failed. Pinsky must believe in what he's doing because he continues to do it, but the book doesn't show any sort of payoff for all the work.

Petra CigareX says

I'd never heard of Dr. Drew Pinsky before I bought this book. Now I know a lot about him - the book is a paean to his thoughts on his own brilliance as a doctor, broadcaster, father, athlete, inspirational speaker, resister-of-sexy-patients and everything else that illustrates he has ascended to the absolute pinnacle of achievement in 21st century America.

It seems these days that every celebrity has to have a stint or three in rehab for street cred (it's so stressful being a multi-millionaire star with a huge entourage to look after one's every need including scoring drugs) and I was interested to see exactly what rehab involved. This was not the book that was going to enlighten me. Dr. Pinsky was involved only on the medical rather than psychological or behavioural side. That is, he prescribed medicines to ease his patients' physical progress through the rigours of going cold turkey. This is less than fascinating and his patients aren't celebs to provoke a satisfying smirk of schadenfreude, just boring, strung-out, generally self-absorbed individuals. Dr. Pinsky says that all these individuals suffered childhood abuse which led directly, in those physically susceptible to it, to almost-unavoidable drug or alcohol addiction. Oh, childhood abuse again. Right.

The rest of the book is taken up with relating stories from his other medical practice, his five-nights-a-week radio show, public speaking, and strange almost non-relationship with his wife, mother of his triplet children (Little League and ballet recitals duly attended) who leads an almost totally-separate life from her husband. Still, perhaps not strange, what with all those money- and fame-making activities and writing the book there probably wasn't much time left over and anyway, who'd want a close relationship with such an excessively self-involved person?

I don't very often give a book just one star, and if I hadn't disliked the author quite so much, I might have given it two. But to be fair, there is a culture clash here. Bragging of one's own achievements is a perfectly valid and even praiseworthy activity in the US but considered absolutely contemptible in the UK and I was raised in Britain. So read the book, listen to the radio show, catch him on his reality tv show and judge for yourselves.

This isn't an edit, just a few extra sentences that I wanted to add in the light of having seen both his tv show Celebrity Rehab and some gossip thing he does after the Nancy Grace rants. The Celeb Rehab has confirmed my belief that the z-lister celebs can't stand being the same nobodies that we all are and will do anything to get back in the public eye. Including showing themselves off at their very worst. Especially if they are being paid large sums for it. But it also showed Dr. Pinsky as a much more caring and involved doctor than his book led me to believe. He's also very personable. Unfortunately the tv show after Nancy Grace rather puts my opinion of him back again!

