



Middle-Class Waifs: The Psychodynamic Treatment of Affectively Disturbed Children (Psychoanalytic Inquiry Book Series, Vol 12)

Elaine V. Siegel

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In this volume, a well-known psychoanalyst, dance therapist, and educational consultant chronicles her clinical work with deeply troubled children who fall between the cracks of our diagnostic and educational systems. These children, who frequently turn out to have been sexually or punitively abused, have no real emotional home despite the fact that they live in materially comfortable circumstances. In spite of their apparent brightness and precocity, they do not thrive in the classroom, where their disruptive behavior, tendency to act out, and fragmented learning bring them to the attention of teachers, counselors, and school psychologists. Standard diagnoses do not explain their plight; such children are neither retarded nor learning disabled nor neurotic.

Through poignant case studies, Siegel reviews the developmental circumstances that bring these middle-class waifs to a critical impasse with both their parents and the educational establishment. Time and again she discovers that the children's expectable developmental course has been derailed by their accommodation to parental abuse and deformed parental expectations. Psychodynamic treatment invariably uncovers the maladaptive solutions that fueled the children's behavioral and learning disturbances.

This volume speaks to a broad clinical and non-clinical readership: psychoanalytic clinicians; psychologists; counselors; social workers; art, dance, and music therapists; special education teachers; child therapists; and child care workers. They will all join in admiration of Siegel's treatment approach which focuses on what is healthy in deeply traumatized children and, in so doing, helps debunk the myth of the untreatable child.

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