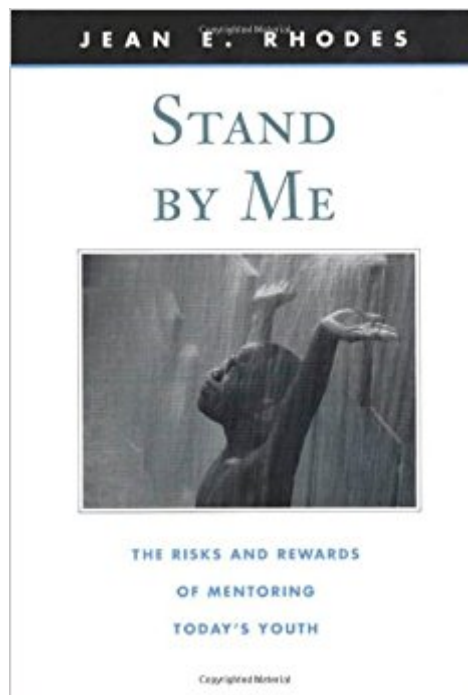


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Stand By Me: The Risks And Rewards Of Mentoring Today's Youth (The Family And Public Policy)



Synopsis

A child at loose ends needs help, and someone steps in--a Big Brother, a Big Sister, a mentor from the growing ranks of volunteers offering their time and guidance to more than two million American adolescents. Does it help? How effective are mentoring programs, and how do they work? Are there pitfalls, and if so, what are they? Such questions, ever more pressing as youth mentoring initiatives expand their reach at a breakneck pace, have occupied Jean Rhodes for more than a decade. In this provocative, thoroughly researched, and lucidly written book, Rhodes offers readers the benefit of the latest findings in this burgeoning field, including those from her own extensive, groundbreaking studies. Outlining a model of youth mentoring that will prove invaluable to the many administrators, caseworkers, volunteers, and researchers who seek reliable information and practical guidance, *Stand by Me* describes the extraordinary potential that exists in such relationships, and discloses the ways in which nonparent adults are uniquely positioned to encourage adolescent development. Yet the book also exposes a rarely acknowledged risk: unsuccessful mentoring relationships--always a danger when, in a rush to form matches, mentors are dispatched with more enthusiasm than understanding and preparation--can actually harm at-risk youth. Vulnerable children, Rhodes demonstrates, are better left alone than paired with mentors who cannot hold up their end of the relationships. Drawing on work in the fields of psychology and personal relations, Rhodes provides concrete suggestions for improving mentoring programs and creating effective, enduring mentoring relationships with youth.

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Customer Reviews

With over two million young people now involved in an adult volunteer program and further growth expected, mentoring is an important topic. Here, Rhodes (psychology, Univ. of Massachusetts, Boston) well summarizes the results of her decade-long analysis, as well as other studies (e.g., the Public/Private Venture's survey of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America) of what exactly makes youth mentoring programs effective. Mentors, she found, can greatly support at-risk adolescents in three important ways: enhancing their social skills, improving the cognitive skills through dialog and listening, and serving as a role model and advocate. However, those not up to the difficult task of forming an emotional bond can actually harm more than help. Demonstrating strong research and writing skills, Rhodes also defines mentoring, discusses some of the social and political factors that have heightened interest in mentoring, reviews the risks of these relationships, highlights some of the lessons from behavioral therapy that might be profitably applied to mentoring, and makes recommendations for further research. Highly recommended for all academic libraries supporting the social sciences. Dale Farris, Groves, TXCopyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

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Rhodes, a psychology professor, examines the popularity of mentoring programs and their effectiveness in improving the prospects of disadvantaged youth. She particularly focuses on research involving the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America, the best-known youth-mentoring organization, showing that at-risk youth who are mentored through structured programs are more likely to succeed. Rhodes examines the psychological process of mentoring, the bonds that develop between mentors and youth, what each group brings to the process and what they get out of it, and the important role that adults who are not their parents can play in the development of children. She also examines how programs are structured and the importance of training mentors and monitoring the relationship, particularly how relationships are terminated. Rhodes' aim is to provide parents, policy makers, and social-service providers with information on what is working and why. Although Rhodes' style is somewhat academic, her profiles of actual mentoring relationships make the book accessible to a broader range of readers. Vanessa BushCopyright © American Library

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This book helped me to understand how mentoring helps (the theory) Even better. this book

explains the whys of "what works" and "what does not work". For me this is a keeper to refer back to.

Very well written. Based on what appears to be a pretty thorough review of the available literature, but written in a manner that is digestible for a wide variety of audiences. Covers most major topics, from match to closure. Discusses variables associated with effective programs and matches.

A must read for anyone mentoring an at risk youth!

Dr. Rhodes knows her stuff, and beyond her interest in facts, figures and statistics you get the feeling she actually cares about youth in a one to one way, not just in hundreds of thousands. When she says that there are two million teens involved in some sort of mentoring program, it makes you feel sad about the millions more who need such a program and yet don't have the means or incentive to discover it for themselves. For, as her research shows, such programs are often of great benefit to the youths, who would grow up with twisted morality or stunted social values without mentoring. And yet there is a dark side to this happy story, for all too often (says Dr. Rhodes) there may be a boy or girl whose psyche is not helped at all by tutoring (or mentoring) and who may be poorly matched with someone who really only cares for them to the extent that they can feel good about themselves and tell their friends around the water cooler, "Oh, I helped my Little Brother this weekend," when really all he did was perhaps drive him to an arcade and give him a ten dollar bill telling the boy to enjoy himself. Such mentoring does not help--and even worse, this may hurt the kids. For young people are not cogs in a mechanical wheel, and they do not have interchangeable parts. In this way adolescence has bypassed modernism, and it is time the sociologists realized it. Dr. Rhodes follows correct protocols, and yet she still believes in the sanctity of the individual personality--you might even say, the "soul" of the at-risk teen.

As someone who was searching for a book on mentoring young students this book helps put things into perspective. Ms. Rhodes explains the benefits of the youth needing to be helped and those who help them. Rhodes examines the psychological process behind mentoring. She expands upon the bonds that develop between mentors and youth, what they bring to the process and what they get out of it, and the important role adults who are not their parents can play in the development of children. A lot of us know that mentoring is important but she brings the facts to life. She explains the need to take great care when deciding to be a mentor or not, in fact she says do not become a

mentor if your heart is not completely into it. She uses many different theories to prove her points and help you better understand why young people need to be mentored, regardless of their backgrounds. I thought that I knew a lot about the benefits of mentoring the young, but she clarifies why the young need the mentoring and why there is a stronger need for mentors these days. She explains that there are more single parent or dual working parents and therefore there is less adult child relationships within the family. She tells us of the importance of mentors to help the young become better people by basing their decisions on good role models and not just their friends.

As someone who has worked in the field of youth mentoring for over 30 years, this is a book I've been waiting for. Ms. Rhodes combines research with readability, validating what a lot of us already know about the power of mentoring. Equally important are her concerns as mentoring programs expand into new venues and plan on significant growth. Her research reminds us of the challenges and care that must be taken to build sustainable, long term relationships. Having read the original Public Private Ventures research on Big Brother Big Sister, I found her deeper analysis of their data and findings an excellent addition to the original findings of the study. The chapters on why some relationships work and others fail, is insightful and should be read by any adult involved in a mentoring relationship or considering the possibility. Again, her ability to translate her research into practical how to advice, and explain why it works is extraordinary. For program planners, her step-by-step advice on how to develop an effective mentoring program is invaluable and research based. Her emphasis on training and the infrastructure of support needed for mentors to be successful, is an important reminder as mentoring goes "to scale". There is a wealth of information in this easily readable book and I highly recommend it to anyone who cares about effective, quality mentoring for today's youth.

Jean Rhodes, professor of psychology at UMass-Boston and former faculty member at Harvard and UChicago, has written the most thorough book to date about the mentoring process. Employing superb research skills and accessible language for both a professional and lay audience, she captures some of the essential components of mentoring that we as a society need to discuss from both a public policy perspective and a psychological care approach. Her analysis and discussion of ten years of empirical research help support her argument with essential data that adds to the growing body of knowledge on mentoring. This is a book for community activists, religious leaders, social scientists and concerned citizens. PM Camic, PhD, Professor of Psychology and Education, Columbia College Chicago

As a teacher and volunteer mentor, I really enjoyed this book. It was written very clearly and I found Jean E. Rhodes' reflections on mentoring to be right on target. She warns us about the possible pitfalls of mentoring, but provides a well-argued path toward creating better relationships. This book has a heart and soul, and I highly recommend it.

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