



Far From the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity

Andrew Solomon

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From the National Book Award–winning author of *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* comes a monumental new work, a decade in the writing, about family. In *Far from the Tree*, Andrew Solomon tells the stories of parents who not only learn to deal with their exceptional children but also find profound meaning in doing so.

Solomon's startling proposition is that diversity is what unites us all. He writes about families coping with deafness, dwarfism, Down syndrome, autism, schizophrenia, multiple severe disabilities, with children who are prodigies, who are conceived in rape, who become criminals, who are transgender. While each of these characteristics is potentially isolating, the experience of difference within families is universal, as are the triumphs of love Solomon documents in every chapter.

All parenting turns on a crucial question: to what extent parents should accept their children for who they are, and to what extent they should help them become their best selves. Drawing on forty thousand pages of interview transcripts with more than three hundred families, Solomon mines the eloquence of ordinary people facing extreme challenges. Whether considering prenatal screening for genetic disorders, cochlear implants for the deaf, or gender reassignment surgery for transgender people, Solomon narrates a universal struggle toward compassion. Many families grow closer through caring for a challenging child; most discover supportive communities of others similarly affected; some are inspired to become advocates and activists, celebrating the very conditions they once feared. Woven into their courageous and affirming stories is Solomon's journey to accepting his own identity, which culminated in his midlife decision, influenced by this research, to become a parent.

Elegantly reported by a spectacularly original thinker, *Far from the Tree* explores themes of generosity, acceptance, and tolerance—all rooted in the insight that love can transcend every prejudice. This crucial and revelatory book expands our definition of what it is to be human.

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