


YOU ARE NOT ALONE



Hope for Hurting Parents
of Troubled Kids

Dena Yohe

Praise for
You Are Not Alone

“Parents of prodigals often wrestle with feelings of profound loneliness and alienation. In her moving account, Dena Yohe offers encouraging reminders that countless other parents have been there too. Her wise and compassionate advice is sure to comfort and uplift many hurting moms and dads.”

—JIM DALY, president of Focus on the Family

“This honest book is full of Dena’s wisdom, experience, and compassion. Her daughter’s story has helped thousands of young people believe that no matter the circumstances they’re not alone and recovery is possible. I have no doubt that Dena’s perspective will do the same for parents.”

—JAMIE TWOROWSKI, founder of To Write Love on Her Arms
and New York Times best-selling author of *If You Feel Too Much*

“Ms. Yohe’s writing echoes in the deepest chamber of my parent-heart because she teaches me how much parent-love hurts, breaks, then heals, and—ultimately—molds us into people who can be deeply engaged in the Spirit of God. While there is no doubt that I will be using this book in my clinical counseling practice, I can also imagine that there is a hungry and vast readership that has been longing to hear from an author who understands the grit it takes to hope for a better tomorrow. She teaches us parents to ‘starve our fears and feed our faith’ with practical ways to grieve and respond to the difficult issues. What a vital resource!”

—MARY ELLEN MANN, LCSW, president of Last Battle and
Mann Counseling Group

“Having a child or family member struggling with things like addiction or depression can lead to so many painful days and hopeless nights. These are often places we feel so alone, but Dena and her family have been there and their words are such a gift. This is not a book of quick fixes but of practical wisdom from someone who has been down those dark roads. Dena (and Renéé) have the unique ability to offer real help with beautiful compassion, for both you and your child. This book is a wonderful

resource of direction, clarity, courage, and hope. It will be a wonderful resource of not just steps in coping but also movements toward healing.”

—AARON MOORE, licensed mental health counselor, founder of Solace Counseling, and speaker for To Write Love On Her Arms

“*You Are Not Alone* is a powerful resource written by a mom who learned how to live through her daughter’s cutting, drug addiction, and depression. Her story gives Christian parents permission to be honest with their anguish, guilt, shame, and fear, but also gives them tools so they don’t get lost in their child’s poor choices. One of the most helpful chapters teaches how parents love their wayward child yet emotionally detach. You will learn to stop enabling, covering, or protecting, and to trust God with your child’s future without forsaking your own.”

—LESLIE VERNICK, LCSW, relationship coach, speaker, and author of *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* and *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship*

“I’ve walked with Dena Yohe through much of her journey with Reneé, and she tells that story so well, so passionately, so gently, so truthfully, so hopefully. You can feel the pain she endured and the fear she survived. Gratefully she lets us in on lessons learned, where to go for help for yourself and your prodigal, and how to hold tight to your child with love and grace. If you love a prodigal, you will be so thankful for this book.”

—JUDY DOUGLASS, office of the president of Cru, founder of Prayer for Prodigals and Worldwide Prodigal Prayer Day, and author of *Letters to My Children: Secrets of Success*

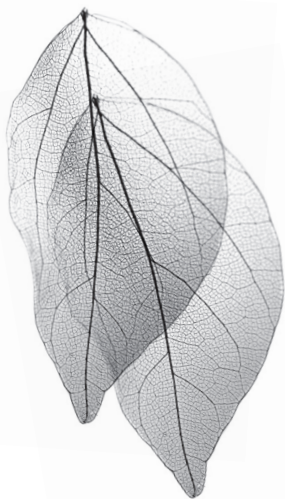
“The dark years of my son’s heroin addiction and imprisonment changed not only his life but mine as well. In her riveting debut book, *You Are Not Alone*, Dena Yohe gives us a mother’s powerful perspective on pain and suffering viewed through the lens of God’s sovereignty and purpose—it is healing salve for a wounded heart.”

—ALLISON BOTTKE, best-selling author of *Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children* and the Setting Boundaries series

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Excerpted from You Are Not Enough by Dena Yohe. Copyright © 2016 by Dena Yohe
Excerpted by permission of WaterBrook & Multnomah, imprints of Penguin Random House.
All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in
writing from the publisher.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE



**Hope for Hurting Parents
of Troubled Kids**

Dena Yohe



WATERBROOK

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

This book is not intended to replace the advice of a trained psychological professional. Readers are advised to consult a qualified professional regarding treatment. The author and publisher specifically disclaim liability, loss, or risk, personal or otherwise, which is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use or application of any of the contents of this book.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked (AMPC) are taken from the Amplified Bible Classic Edition. Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org). Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from the ESV® Bible (the Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (TLB) are taken from The Living Bible copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (MSG) are taken from The Message. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc. Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the New American Standard Bible®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org). Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

Trade Paperback ISBN 978-1-60142-837-0

eBook ISBN 978-1-60142-838-7

Copyright © 2016 by Dena Yohe

Cover design by Kristopher K. Orr

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in the United States by WaterBrook, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, New York.

WATERBROOK® and its deer colophon are registered trademarks of Penguin Random House LLC.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Yohe, Dena, author.

Title: You are not alone : hope for hurting parents of troubled kids / Dena Yohe.

Description: First Edition. | Colorado Springs, Colorado : WaterBrook Press, 2016. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016002918 (print) | LCCN 2016012953 (ebook) | ISBN 9781601428370 (trade pbk.) | ISBN 9781601428387 (electronic)

Subjects: LCSH: Parents of children with disabilities—Religious life. | Hope—Religious aspects—Christianity.

Classification: LCC BV4596.P35 Y64 2016 (print) | LCC BV4596.P35 (ebook) | DDC 248.8/45—dc23

LC record available at <http://lccn.loc.gov/2016002918>

Printed in the United States of America

2016—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

SPECIAL SALES

Most WaterBrook books are available at special quantity discounts when purchased in bulk by corporations, organizations, and special-interest groups. Custom imprinting or excerpting can also be done to fit special needs. For information, please e-mail specialmarketscms@penguinrandomhouse.com or call 1-800-603-7051.

To Tom, my loving, faithful, supportive husband. You believed in this book so much that you allowed yourself to be neglected many days and nights. You walked this journey by my side with incredible amounts of understanding and patience. You're my greatest cheerleader. I'm honored to share our story and what we've learned along the way. Thank you for trusting me with it.

Contents

1	You Will Survive.	1
2	An Unexpected Journey.	8
3	Disappointment.	16
4	Denial.	25
5	Shock	35
6	Fear and Worry	51
7	Grief and Loss	70
8	Forgiveness.	84
9	Letting Go	95
10	Exhaustion: What's the Remedy?	124
11	A New Kind of Hope	133
12	The Why Question: Finding Purpose for the Pain	145
13	Can You Thrive Again?	156
14	Discoveries About Prayer	165
15	Surprised by Gratitude	171
	Afterword	176
	For Those Who Want to Help Someone Else	178
	If the Unthinkable Happens	183
	The Chair Exercise	189
	More Help for Specific Worries	190
	Resources and Book List	192
	Acknowledgments	204
	A Tribute to David	206
	Notes	210



You Will Survive

The only real tragedy is a life that ends without . . . hope.

—Nancy Guthrie, *The One Year Book of Hope*

Everyone who knew Reneé thought she was doing well. But danger lurks around every corner for recovering addicts who also struggle with mental illness and self-injury, especially in the early years of sobriety. This was my twenty-two-year-old daughter's situation. By 2009 Reneé had crisscrossed the country for three years to share her inspirational message of hope, but she had never traveled alone—until now. Reneé flew to a new city, then drove herself to a small university for a speaking engagement. That evening she, a gifted communicator, spoke to a group of students and professors. Audiences found her beauty, candor, and eloquence captivating. Amazed at how much she had overcome, many stayed after the presentation to talk with her personally.

“May I have your autograph?”

“Would you take a picture with me?”

“You’re my hero. Your story saved my life.”

It was both a blessing and a burden.

Since Reneé’s story had gone around the world and inspired millions (via a nonprofit called To Write Love on Her Arms), this had become a common scene. But she never got used to it. For many who struggle with the same issues—addiction, cutting, mental illness, suicidal tendencies,

and the sexual trauma that often accompanies a dangerous lifestyle—Reneé was a significant source of encouragement. To some, she became an idol.

In her pain-filled story, both young and old found what they needed to continue walking out their own stories: hope and courage. Hope to believe things could get better, and courage never to give up fighting for their lives.

On this night Reneé told her moving story one more time, then hung out afterward to talk with students and faculty as long as she could bear it. Unbeknownst to anyone, her recovery was unraveling. Life had been draining out without being replenished. The battle was raging and she was losing.

My mother heart was about to be crushed—again.

SHATTERED PEACE

The phone rang in our bedroom at 3:00 a.m., piercing the peaceful silence of the night. Adrenaline pumped through my veins. Phone calls after midnight were never a good thing.

My husband, Tom, sleepily answered the phone while I struggled to catch my breath. I tried not to assume the worst, yet somehow I knew. A sense of dread welled within me.

We've been here before. I don't want to go back. I don't think I can do this again. It was brutal the first time. I'm not ready, Lord.

No one ever is.

"Hello? Reneé, is that you?" I heard Tom say.

I knew it. I wish I had been wrong. Years of experience had trained my ear to recognize the sound of distress in my husband's voice.

"What happened, honey? Where are you? What?" Panic rose in his voice.

"I can't understand you. Slow down. Please, Reneé, calm down. Take

some deep breaths. You can do it. Panicking won't help. Now, what did you say?"

There was an uncomfortable pause. I hurried to Tom's side and sat beside him so I could hear both sides of the conversation.

"I'm scared, Daddy." *If she's afraid, it must be bad*, I thought.

"What are you afraid of, honey?" he asked calmly.

"I can't get the bleeding to stop!"

Oh, God, no. I covered my mouth to keep from screaming.

"And I've been drinking." Crying like a baby, she confessed, "Oh, Daddy, I took too many pills."

Letting out a groan, I doubled over. I felt as if I were sobbing deep in my gut, though nothing audible came out of my mouth. Tom began to pace.

"How many pills did you take, René?"

She whimpered, "I don't know! I don't know!"

"Where are you?" he asked, on the verge of tears.

"I'm in my hotel room. I'm on the floor in the bathroom. I'm getting sleepy and there's so much blood." She sounded groggy. "I don't know what to do!"

Nausea swept over me. I envisioned blood dripping from scarred arms onto pristine tiles.

Then, in a voice filled with remorse, she said, "Oh, Daddy, I feel so guilty. I don't want to disappoint all those people who look up to me."

"Oh, René, I know you don't," Tom reassured. "I understand. It's really, really hard. I'm so sorry, honey."

Don't worry about them right now. Your life is in danger!

As I listened, salty tears streamed down my cheeks. *Her heart is so beautiful. How can she be so broken?*

Tom said, "But listen to me. No one expected you to be perfect."

Not in the beginning, but maybe I had started to. The realization jolted me.

Reneé stammered an unintelligible response.

Tom continued, "You made a mistake, but you're going to get back up and begin again. You're going to be okay. It won't be easy, but you can do it."

Yes. Yes. With God's help, you can. Hearing the confidence in my husband's voice increased mine. All I could hear from the receiver was weeping.

"You've come so far, Reneé. Remember, the only way you can fail is to give up."

"I won't give up, Daddy. I won't."

I wanted to believe her with all my heart.

"Okay, now you've got to listen to me closely and do exactly what I tell you. Don't hang up, but put your cell phone down. Grab some towels and wrap up your arms. Then go find the hotel phone in your room and call the front desk. Tell them it's an emergency. Then come right back to your phone in the bathroom. I'll be waiting here for you. Go do it right now."

Oh, my precious princess, hurry back to your phone. Don't go too far away. Daddy and I will be waiting for you.

I rocked back and forth as I sat on the side of our bed in the darkness, shaking and praying.

We waited. Not knowing how severe her wounds were or how much danger she was in was pure torture.

Finally, we heard her weak voice on the phone again. Tom and I let out a collective sigh of relief. Thank God. Help was on the way.

"Good job, sweetheart. I'll stay here with you and keep talking until help arrives. I know you're scared. I understand how much you hate hospitals and psych wards, but your life may be at stake."

Please let them get there in time. We didn't even know the name of the hotel or we would have called for help ourselves. *I beg You, God, please save my child.*

The next words I heard from Renéé stunned me. “Are you mad at me, Daddy? I didn’t mean to hurt you and Mom like this.”

Dear God, help me.

Tom shook his head as he almost shouted, emphasizing each word, “Oh, no, Renéé! *No*. We’re not mad. We hurt for you. It breaks our hearts to see you in so much pain. We love you. We’ll always be here for you!”

Her next question broke me wide open. “Can you forgive me? Can you and Mom ever forgive me?”

Falling to his knees, Tom choked, “Yes, of course we forgive you, Renéé. You don’t *ever* have to wonder about that. We love you no matter what. We’ve always told you there’s nothing you could do that would make us love you any more or any less. Nothing will ever change that. Nothing.”

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Ten years before, I noticed the early warning signs of trouble, but I didn’t know what they meant—or I didn’t want to know. When Renéé was twelve she cut herself the first time and began to show symptoms of depression.

Little did I know she had a problem that would become serious and life threatening.

Or where this journey would lead.

Or how much pain it would bring.

I never could have imagined my daughter’s gradual, bumpy recovery from substance abuse and other life-altering issues. I never dreamed her story would be the beginning of an international nonprofit called To Write Love on Her Arms (TWLOHA.com), bringing hope to millions of hurting men and women all over the world.

Little did I know how her life would change mine.

But this is not Renéé’s story. That is for her to tell. This is my

story—my perspective as a mother who learned to cope with deep pain, a mom who learned to let go of broken dreams and discover new ones.

I'm not the only one. Countless parents struggle as I have—and maybe you have too. We wrestle with the same feelings of denial, shock, disappointment, hurt, anger, fear, and loss. Most of all, we don't want anyone to know. We tend to suffer alone. Lacking support and feeling devoid of hope, we struggle in isolation. And our heartache intensifies.

LESSENING THE HEARTACHE

Let's pause for a moment. I want to clarify that this is not a how-to-change-or-fix-your-child book. I have no strategies for guaranteed success. No tips to avoid trouble. I can't tell you how to do that.

But, parent, you are my focus. Lending you a hand as you try to cope with what might be the most excruciating experiences of your life is the whole point. My goal is to share what helped me, what got me through my darkest days, not knowing how the future would unfold.

Friend, fellow parent, when we're willing to be honest, to share our pain with other hurting parents and hear others' stories, something unexpected happens. A mysterious exchange takes place. Our discouragement lessens and we find the strength we lacked. We let go of despair and unearth fresh comfort, even community. We find the courage to press on.

And then, at last, we realize we aren't alone. We can make it—together. If I'm able to continue my journey without knowing how it will end, then maybe you can too. I may not know the future for my child, but I know Who holds it. I can trust God with all my tomorrows and all of Renee's. With His help, you and I can find strength and comfort to carry us through our worst times.

Again, I can't tell you how to keep your child from making mistakes. But I can encourage and equip you with facts, tools, and resources. I can show you—worn-out Mom or Dad—you can survive this night-

mare. Not only that, I'm confident that one day, somehow, you can thrive again.

"Impossible," you say. "How can you make such a ludicrous statement?" I can tell you how: personal experience, from the core of my belief and the foundation of my hope, based on the words of Jesus, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). These are the very things I want to unpack in the chapters that follow.

It's my prayer that in the pages ahead you'll find new hope and come to believe you can thrive again. I'll share my honest journey, including mistakes made, eye-opening discoveries, and ways to cope that you might not have thought of. You'll read about the truths God showed me and the steps I took that made all the difference. You'll find resources and hear from experts and from fellow parents on a similar path. Reneé will also offer her insights where appropriate, providing a once-troubled child's viewpoint. They're things she wants you to know. I wish I had known them years ago. And each chapter will end with scriptures that helped me. I hope they'll help you too.

Scripture That Helps

Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths. (Proverbs 3:5–6, AMPC)

Continue reading
You Are Not Alone
Order your copy today!

BUY NOW

Buy the ebook to continue reading now!

amazonkindle

nook

Googlebooks

iBooks



WATERBROOK