



America Anonymous: Eight Addicts in Search of a Life

Benoit Denizet-Lewis

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America Anonymous is the unforgettable story of eight men and women from around the country -- including a grandmother, a college student, a bodybuilder, and a housewife -- struggling with addictions. For nearly three years, acclaimed journalist Benoit Denizet-Lewis immersed himself in their lives as they battled drug and alcohol abuse, overeating, and compulsive gambling and sexuality. Alternating with their stories is Denizet-Lewis's candid account of his own recovery from sexual addiction and his compelling examination of our culture of addiction, where we obsessively search for new and innovative ways to escape the reality of the present moment and make ourselves feel "better."

Addiction is arguably this country's biggest public-health crisis, triggering and exacerbating many of our most pressing social problems (crime, poverty, skyrocketing health-care costs, and childhood abuse and neglect). But while cancer and AIDS survivors have taken to the streets -- and to the halls of Congress -- demanding to be counted, millions of addicts with successful long-term recovery talk only to each other in the confines of anonymous Twelve Step meetings. (A notable exception is the addicted celebrity, who often enters and exits rehab with great fanfare.) Through the riveting stories of Americans in various stages of recovery and relapse, Denizet-Lewis shines a spotlight on our most misunderstood health problem (is addiction a brain disease? A spiritual malady? A moral failing?) and breaks through the shame and denial that still shape our cultural understanding of it -- and hamper our ability to treat it.

Are Americans more addicted than people in other countries, or does it just seem that way? Can food or sex be as addictive as alcohol and drugs? And will we ever be able to treat addiction with a pill? These are just a few of the questions Denizet-Lewis explores during his remarkable journey inside the lives of men and women struggling to become, or stay, sober. As the addicts in this book stumble, fall, and try again to make a different and better life, Denizet-Lewis records their struggles -- and his own -- with honesty and empathy.

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