

BOOK REVIEW

The Same but Different: How Twins Can Live, Love and Learn to be Individuals

Joan A. Friedman (2014), Rocky Pines Press, Los Angeles CA, 192 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9893464-3-6.

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Joan Friedman has written this book for the adult same-sex identical and non-identical twins, their families, and significant others. She speaks directly to the twin reader. Her voice reaches out to the twin who has struggled with being a twin, possibly more clearly than to a twin who has not had major issues in developing as an independent adult. The implication is that most twins will have some feelings about their twinship that could do with recognition, acknowledgment, ventilation, and possibly readjustment. Friedman is in a strong position to know. She is herself a twin (she has an identical twin sister), the mother of twins, an author of a previous book on twins (*Emotionally Healthy Twins: A New Philosophy for Parenting Two Unique Children*), and a psychotherapist specializing in twin issues.

Throughout the book Friedman uses many examples from therapeutic interviews with twins in her own psychotherapy practice in California. There is clearly a great depth of professional experience driving her wish to help adult (and adolescent) twins. Personal issues from her own twinship also seem to strongly inform her approach, guidelines, and messages. She and her twin had a different experience from many children in that their parents were not actively engaged in parenting their twin daughters, so Friedman assumed the role of a parent to her twin sister. This experience and the fact that Friedman and her sister were monozygotic or identical twins have impacted on her insights.

Dr Friedman focuses particularly on twins who have imbalances like this in their relationship. Nevertheless, she speaks to a wider audience of twins with her view that there is a 'twin mystique' and that 'being a twin is a secret struggle' (p. 2). Most twins would relate to having to deal with

the expectations and assumptions of singletons about what being a twin is like. People do think there is something special and magical about being an identical twin, in particular. Perhaps some twins even ascribe to and promote this view themselves. There are certainly challenges in growing up in the same-sex twin pair, and some of these challenges may well continue into adulthood. Friedman describes the pressure for these struggles to be kept secret because of the assumptions of others about the twin bond. This need to suppress negative feelings about being a twin is a factor for some individuals in twin pairs. The love-hate continuum she describes rings true, and is perhaps more polarized for twins than for non-twin siblings, but Friedman does accept that there are great variations in closeness between pairs of siblings. Some citations of relevant research by others would be useful.

Friedman's clinical and personal experience cannot be questioned and suggests that for a substantial number of US twin pairs, issues between co-twins create intense psychological difficulties that may be more common than admitted. I wonder whether this introspective focus is particularly specific to the US society. My sense is that in Australia twins might be more likely to deal with the issues in other ways than seeking therapy. I wonder whether the same-sex non-identical twins suffer fewer comparisons if co-twins look different and behave differently from each other. Do non-identical twins have the same identity and independence issues as identical twins? Perhaps few same-sex siblings escape the ubiquitous comparisons. I think these questions are important. An unresolved issue I have with the book is that Friedman never informs if the twins she is describing are identical or non-identical. I think this would

matter, assuming that these days most twins are better informed about their zygosity than has been the case in the past. Friedman sees all twin pairs as being different from non-twin siblings by virtue of the fact that they are of the same age. Maybe zygosity is less important in the scheme of things than growing up together and being identified by others as half of a twin pair.

Friedman's general thesis is that emotional pain is caused by feelings being suppressed and unexamined (p. 10). Her strong message is that feelings (e.g., of resentment, and shame about having the feelings) need to be recognized and articulated by twins. Friedman aims to reassure twins that there is no shame in having these feelings. She succeeds in her aim. The book is devised as a series of chapters that include useful 'surveys' and checklists for twins to identify their own feelings. In fact, Chapter 1 is entitled 'Outing Your Feelings'. Each chapter ends with guidelines for dealing with the problem. Some chapter titles — for example, 'My Twin, My Caretaker' — may be hard for many twins to relate to, but Friedman must have seen many cases like this, so it cannot be uncommon. Other chapters with titles such as 'Twin Closeness — Assumptions and Realities' and 'Comparing the Pair of You' are likely to speak to more twin pairs. The chapter 'Seeking a Twin-Like Friend or Lover' may be a more common issue for twins. Actually, having a partner who is also a twin would likely provide understanding of growing up as a twin and the implications for boundaries, closeness, competition, and 'fairness' that many twins in my experience have.

If I understand it correctly, the key Friedman proposes for successfully disentangling oneself from one's twin and twinship seems to be learning to think of one's twin as just a same-age sibling. This sounds like a very sensible idea for 'Claiming Yourself', the title of Friedman's eighth and final chapter. However, it may not be achieved simply, and the guidelines she provides reflect what for some twins may be a long and complex path.

I must admit to becoming frustrated by about page 16, and on page 17 I disagree with the first sentence: 'The truth is that you cannot be authentic with anyone if you're not in touch with your emotional core, and for twins that core includes the person who was born on your birthday'. There are some assumptions about twins 'wanting to be the same' and wanting to feel the same (p. 4) that are certainly not part of my experience as an identical twin. Would the non-identical, same-sex co-twins generally really feel this way? Would most twins feel shame in not feeling close? Surely, most adult twins have developed individual adult lives and their co-twin is not at the core of their lives? I can't criticize Friedman because she is telling her own experience, which is broader and deeper than my own, but it is very different from mine. This may be simply because it is the experience from a long practice of psychotherapy.

Because Friedman is a psychotherapist, she deploys terms in this context with which many readers will be unfamiliar. For example, the term 'authentic' is not likely to be understood well by readers who are unfamiliar with this particular approach to psychotherapy. Perhaps 'authentic' in the therapeutic context could be defined early in the book. It seems to mean 'real' or 'genuine', but the term is used as meaning something different from 'honest'. Perhaps a non-therapy term would be better comprehended.

This book will be helpful for the same-sex twins who have unresolved feelings or issues about their co-twin or about being a twin. It provides practical tools and will help readers know whether seeking professional help is something they feel the need to do. It is likely to appeal more to those who have issues rather than those getting on with their lives as independent adults. The case examples will either serve to reassure readers that they are functioning relatively well in comparison or will help twins feel that they are not alone, that their feelings are validated and not to be ashamed of. In either case, Friedman's goals are very worthy and her book serves twins well.