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SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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ITEM 3481

TENDING DANDELIONS

Honest Meditations for Mothers with Addicted Children

By *Sandra Swenson*

Mothers of addicted and alcoholic children share a deep connection—one that is rarely understood by anyone who hasn't experienced a similar path. Sharing our perspectives helps us all grow stronger, together.

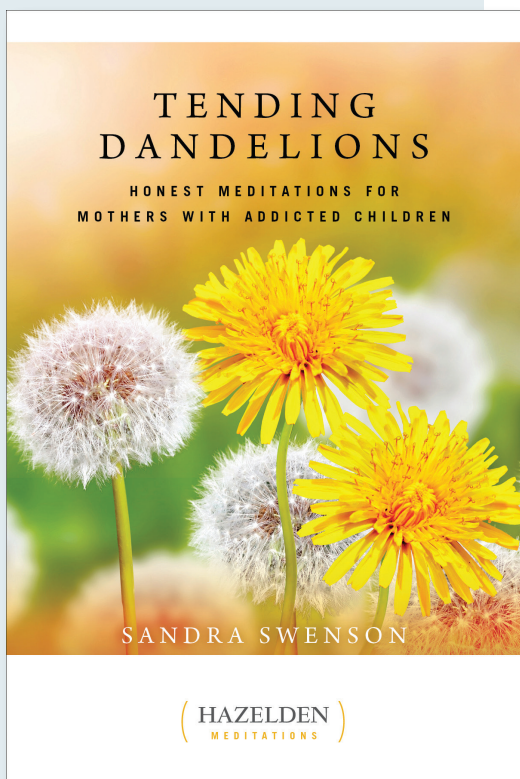
"We all need to take a closer look at the things we've avoided—the things lurking around in this place where love and addiction meet—so we're as strong as we can be."

—Sandra Swenson, author of *Tending Dandelions*

In the shadows of our child's struggles with addiction, we find ourselves tending to a life for which we weren't prepared.

Continuing the tradition of Hazelden's beloved meditation books, *Tending Dandelions* by Sandra Swenson provides moments of recognition, confession, and healing for those who are realizing that recovery rarely follows a neat or comfortable path. Along the way, we plant beautiful roses only to be injured by their thorns, and we pull up unwanted dandelions that, at times, are our only source of wishes.

By sharing the realities we never expected our families to face, mothers of addicted children support each other through experiences that can only be feared and imagined by others. From our shared struggles emerge opportunities for personal growth. *Tending Dandelions* is a vital source of wisdom, support, and strength that helps us begin our own journey of recovery.



Sandra Swenson is the mother of two sons—one of whom struggles with addiction. A voice for the loved ones of addicts, she first documented her experiences with her son's addiction in the critically-acclaimed book *The*

Joey Song. An advocate for acceptance, education, healing, and recovery, Sandra can frequently be found sharing her story.

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EXCERPT FROM *TENDING DANDELIONS*

Where Love and Addiction Meet

The first time my child reached his dimpled little hand out for mine, I was there. And I've tried to be there whenever he's reached out to me—and even when he hasn't—ever since. Until, that is, my child became an addict. Addiction has made such a mess of things that I'm no longer sure if I should be within range when he reaches out (or even when he doesn't).

I don't know if my help is hurting this child of mine. I don't know if I should stay silent or speak up. I'm not sure how to love without doing the things that seem loving, or where to put the dreams and conversations and hugs that have gone unused and are piling up. I don't know how to fill my empty arms, or where to put my love for this child who says he hates me. My heart doesn't understand this place where love and addiction meet—it's all confused about what it means to be my son's mom.

I cannot be there for my child in the way life intended, but my love will always be there whenever he reaches out—and even when he doesn't.

"I mean, it is the most impossible love... it's absolutely fine for me to teach you how to walk and talk, and then you grow up and you head off in the wrong direction toward a cliff. And I'm supposed to just stand there and wave."

Because I Said So

EDITORIAL REVIEWS

"Sandra Swenson has delicately and intentionally provided a wonderful new resource for an often-overlooked population impacted by addiction—mothers. Addiction ravages families and is one of the most complicated illnesses to navigate for a parent. This set of meditations is poised to support those affected by a loved one's addiction in powerful and meaningful ways."

—Greg Williams, co-founder of *Facing Addiction*

"With wisdom and insights born from personal heartache, experience, and a lot of love, this treasure is a goldmine of hope, coping tips, and wit like no other. Mothers and family members of an addict will discover they are NOT alone and, no matter the choices their loved one makes, there is a way to continue to live and love deeply... from afar.

Sandra writes, 'In letting go of you, I'm letting you know that I believe in you. Like a hug, I let go believing that you will find your way back.'"

—Judy Herzanek, co-author of *Why Don't They Just Quit? Hope for Families Struggling with Addiction*