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Confabulations: Creating False Memories, Destroying Families

Eleanor C. Goldstein

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The pioneering critique of recovered memory therapy, *Confabulations* remains one of the best documentations and explanations of how "repressed memory therapy" has destroyed families. "Imagine what it is like to have the person you have loved, nurtured, idolized-your child-suddenly turn against you and accuse you of the most horrendous crimes imaginable," write Goldstein and Farmer. "That is what is happening in the U.S. today." In their own words, distraught parents tell a horrifying tale that becomes all too familiar by the end of the book. A successful, intelligent adult daughter or son goes to a therapist with a problem-perhaps about marriage, children, an inexplicable illness, an eating disorder. She or he emerges from therapy with the belief that all of her or his problems are related to childhood sexual abuse. And after perhaps first accusing a baby- sitter, a cousin, a family friend or a teacher, the parent is almost inevitably accused, not allowed to present a defense, and abandoned. In many cases, the parents are sued and even imprisoned-based on "memories" recovered through hypnosis, dream analysis or other pseudoscientific methods. Experts on memory know that memory is not infallible. The more distant in time a memory becomes, the more fragmented it becomes. Memory can be contaminated by later events and by what a person sees, hears or reads. Childhood memories, especially repressed memories, are often confabulations-a mixture of fact and fantasy.

Confabulations is the first book to describe the emergence of this controversial issue, and has helped thousands of parents and professionals come to grips with this monumental tragedy.

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