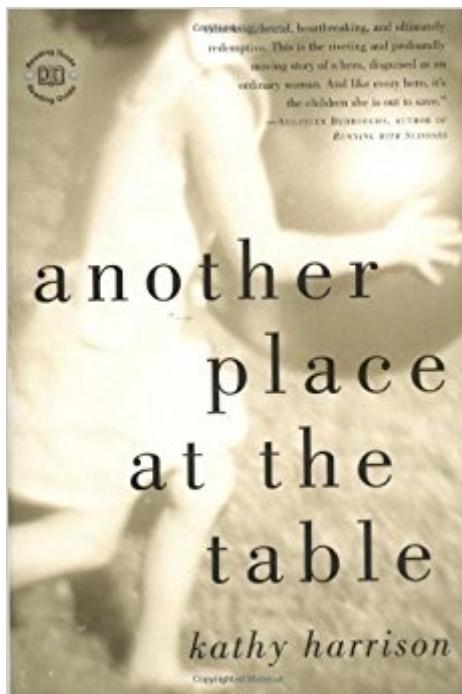


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# Another Place At The Table



## **Synopsis**

The startling and ultimately uplifting narrative of one woman's thirteen-year experience as a foster parent. For more than a decade, Kathy Harrison has sheltered a shifting cast of troubled youngsters—the offspring of prostitutes and addicts; the sons and daughters of abusers; and teenage parents who aren't equipped for parenthood. All this, in addition to raising her three biological sons and two adopted daughters. What would motivate someone to give herself over to constant, largely uncompensated chaos? For Harrison, the answer is easy. *Another Place at the Table* is the story of life at our social services' front lines, centered on three children who, when they come together in Harrison's home, nearly destroy it. It is the frank first-person story of a woman whose compassionate best intentions for a child are sometimes all that stand between violence and redemption.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: TarcherPerigee; Reprint edition (May 24, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1585422827

ISBN-13: 978-1585422821

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 121 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #47,864 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 in Books > Parenting & Relationships > Adoption #163 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Social Services & Welfare #332 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Social Work

## **Customer Reviews**

It's 1988, and Harrison, a happily married mother of three, takes a job with Head Start, working with at-risk four-year-olds. Her heart goes out to the foster kids; before long, she and her husband take state training and adopt two sisters. Five children make a big family, but Harrison finds it tough to turn her back on needy children. She and her husband start accepting emergency care "hot-line" foster children, too; soon, Harrison quits her day job and becomes a full-time-overtime, really-foster parent. In addition to a stay-at-home mom's usual duties, Harrison is caring for children with serious emotional baggage and often complex medical problems. There are lawyers, therapists and social

service people to meet with, plus the scheduling of visits to birth mothers, an emotional roller coaster for all parties. Birth mothers, she finds, are often "harder to hate than you might expect," and when an especially difficult child comes along, it's almost impossible to accept that even foster parents have their limitations. And how do you "give enough" to each child so they get a healthy sense of family, "without loving them too much to let them go in the end?" With over half a million American children in foster care today, Harrison's personal but vitally important account should be read by public policy makers and by anyone with a spare room in their home. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

With so much awful publicity surrounding foster parenting, Harrison's story of opening her home to foster children, three of whom she later adopted, is tender and inspiring. It is also filled with heartbreakingly truths about abused and neglected children and a social service system that is overburdened and occasionally negligent itself. For 13 years, Harrison, along with her husband, three biological sons, and three adopted daughters, has fostered abandoned infants, runaway teens, disabled preschoolers, and children discharged from psychiatric hospitals. The Harrisons also became hot-line foster parents, willing to accept children in emergency situations with little or no notice. Harrison describes the process social workers use to place children, the horrifying circumstances of the children involved, and the training required of foster parents. She brings her story home by focusing, with heart-rending details, on four troubled children, including Danny, a developmentally delayed eight-year-old; Lucy, a deeply depressed eight-year-old abandoned by her mother; seven-month-old Karen, eventually adopted by the Harrisons and later diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome; and Sara, a six-year-old who had been sexually abused. Vanessa Bush Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I purchased this book because I work with foster parents on a daily basis. There is always some foster homes that are not appropriate and can cause the child more harm. Those are the ones that everyone hears about on the news. However, there are also those homes that genuinely care for the children they are entrusted with, and do everything in their power to help the child heal from the trauma that brought them into foster care. Ms. Harrison does a remarkable job of describing me every day situations that can happen in foster care. I recommend this book to all of my foster families, especially the ones with limited experience. It is not always easy taking care of someone else's children, especially the ones who have never experienced what a loving family looks like. I

love how Ms. Harrison is honest and shows that even the best intentioned foster parents are not perfect. As a social worker, dealing with the system on a daily basis is not easy. We are bound by the laws of the state and the policies of the agencies that employ us. It is very difficult to work with foster children and their parents knowing what the child has been through but it has to be done every day. If you have ever considered fostering or adopting from the foster care system, I recommend that you read this book first.

I read this book in two days. Absolutely wonderful. As someone who is highly interested in adoption through foster care, this was a phenomenal book for me to read as I begin to research and read others' first-hand experiences. I cried both heartbreak tears and incredibly happy tears while reading this book. The author details how foster care is such a selfless and exhausting life journey - but one that leaves a lasting impact on all lives involved. GREAT read!

I could not get enough of Kathy Harrison's true stories about the 100 foster kids who have passed through her home. The stories were both entertaining and challenging (I finished the entire book in a few days, which is unusual for me). I so appreciated Kathy's wise perspective on the horrors and injustices she witnesses both in the lives of the kids themselves, and in the system those little ones are forced to be a part of. Had anyone else been telling those same stories, I would've had a hard time finishing this emotionally challenging book, but because of her compassion and wise attempts at maintaining a balanced perspective, I feel I have been enlightened on the subject, rather than left stewing in anger over the sad injustices that are exposed. She somehow manages to simultaneously balance stating the facts and exploring her feelings and opinions regarding those facts, while still allowing you to form your own opinion. Kathy does her best to convince us she's not a saint... and I believe her, but I still can't help admiring her and hoping that one day I'll have even half the compassion, patience, love, and generosity that she extends to the children who have graced her home.

I received this in the mail and read it in one day. This is a well written, extremely compelling story from start to finish. I could not put it down. We have been considering foster care for a few years now and I had read in the reviews that this should be required reading for anyone considering foster care. Boy were they right. Kathy gives an extremely open, honest, and often times cringe worthy blow by blow of her long history of being a foster parent. Hard to read at times, it made you want to run in the opposite direction as foster care, yet at the same time, it made you want to take in every

hurt child. It has a wealth of information for someone entertaining the idea of fostering to consider. I am still processing the information. Her words often times have profound wisdom. She writes as someone who both sees the flaws in the system with a clear view, but who has enough experience to understand that it's unlikely to change and sometimes, you just have to work with what you've got. I think maybe one of the biggest problems facing new foster parents is the naivety that comes with not understanding the full impact of a child's damaged history. A lot of people want to be a child's savior and she so eloquently points out that sometimes, it's just not possible. Sometimes love is not enough. But at the same time, she takes every opportunity to pour profound meaning into being a foster parent. I think this book is a great read for anyone. For most people, even those not interested in foster care, I think it will be an eye-opening experience that will make you more grateful and more loving towards those around you. I read in the back she is writing a follow up book with more specific techniques for harder children. I think that will be a wonderful resource for many foster parents. Some reviewers had commented that there were "too many children to keep track of" and that it made them less interested in the story. I think that is the point of her book! There are far too many children and too few foster homes. They literally have no where to go. So if it confuses you to read about all the children and you think less of the book for it, I think you missed one of her main points that she harped on throughout the entire book.

This really made fostering seem more real. It also made me think that I'm not ready to foster. It was nice to read real life experiences with foster kids, and I still hope that someday I may foster.

Raw, realistic look at the life of a foster mother. If you are considering fostering, this book will inspire and terrify you, but in the end, loving a child in crisis is a moral obligation. FYI, if you are sensitive to foul language, there is quite a lot in this book...mostly from young children who have never been taught better and it's heartbreakingly.

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