

## **Hvad børn ikke ved... har de ondt af** **What children don't know... hurts**

v. Jesper Juul, Familytherapist, Author, Ashoka Fellow

This book is nothing short of a miracle – especially for the children and parents who are coexisting with mental illness as a significant member of their families.

Karen Glistrup did her groundbreaking work with families within a traditional psychiatric institution at a time and in a professional culture, which would have kept most people from even trying. Not only has adult psychiatry generally been very conservative but also the common attitude toward mental illness in society tends to be tainted by secrecy, shame and denial. This book and the authors latest books (German titles) are facilitating important changes in this respect.

This book is not about using family therapy within the psychiatric world – although this would be a splendid idea as well. It's about conversations with and within families, carefully monitored by professionals for the benefit of all involved – including the patient and her cares. These conversations often become very therapeutic.

It has been evident for many years, how family secrets are having a strong negative influence on many levels. They make the relationships between everybody distant; they make everybody feel guilty – especially children – whereas adults can justify keeping a secret by convincing themselves that it is better for the child. Eventually – when the secret is revealed – the adults will feel guilty as well; guilt attenuates the vitality and healthy development of children's self-esteem. This book explains how these general effects tend to become even more poignant when the relationship in question is one between a child and a mentally ill parent.

Because this kind of secret is so painful for all involved it is a big relief when an experienced professional helps the whole family with starting the conversation – a series of dialogues which are not aimed at the diagnosis of the patient but at improving everybody's well-being. Karen Glistrup's book is an excellent guide for any professional who wants to facilitate openness and demystification.

This book is however not only for mental health professionals but a valuable source of knowledge, experience and inspiration for all adults – pedagogues, teachers, parents and grandparents.