

Love Anthony by Lisa Genova

1. Did you like this book? Why or why not? Would you recommend this book to others? Would you keep a copy of this book? Do you think you would read it again in the future?
2. How was reading a work of fiction in comparison to reading the memoirs and case studies? The author, Lisa Genova, has a PhD in neuroscience from Harvard. Do you feel that she was accurate in her portrayal of autism? This is Genova's third novel, the other two are about Alzheimer's and traumatic brain injury. What do you think of this genre? Do you have a name for it? Who might be interested in reading this type of book aside from psychology majors and professors?
3. What did you think about the intertwined narratives in this book? Did you find the stories about Olivia and Beth realistic? What about the setting and the supporting characters? Could you identify with any of this?
4. Would you consider this book to have universal appeal; any person could read it and find significant meaning in it? If so, why? If not, who is the intended audience?
5. Did you learn anything about autism from reading this book?
6. Did you learn anything about love and forgiveness and the meaning of life from this book?
7. Chapter 12 is from Beth's book about Anthony, written in his voice. Did you like the inclusion of these chapters? Do you think it made it easier for you to understand what it might be like to have autism? How accurate do you think this portrayal is? Meaning, do you think that individuals with autism who are nonverbal really have this kind of conscious dialogue happening in their minds? What do you think it would be like to be a parent of a child on the spectrum reading this book, especially if their child is nonverbal? Would there be any possible danger in this kind of portrayal?
8. In Chapter 6 on page 57 is the first journal entry from Olivia. How did the inclusion of these sections add to the story? Did you find them interesting or insightful?
9. Is there an explanation for how Anthony's story was so clearly channeled through Beth? Do you believe it was really him (his spirit) speaking through her? What did you think about this element of the story?
10. Were there things that you did or didn't like about Beth and Olivia? For example, do you think Beth made the right choice in taking Jimmy back? What about the relationship between Olivia and David? It is true that the divorce rate is higher among families with a child on the autism spectrum. Is this a foregone conclusion, or were there things Olivia or David did/didn't do that pushed them in that direction?
11. What role did faith/religion/spirituality play in this book?

DSM V Autism Spectrum Disorder Criteria

Currently, or by history, must meet criteria A, B, C, and D

A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across contexts, not accounted for by general developmental delays, and manifest by all 3 of the following:

1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction
3. Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships

B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities as manifested by at least two of the following:

1. Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects
2. Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change
3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
4. Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment;

C. Symptoms must be present in early childhood (but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities)

D. Symptoms together limit and impair everyday functioning.