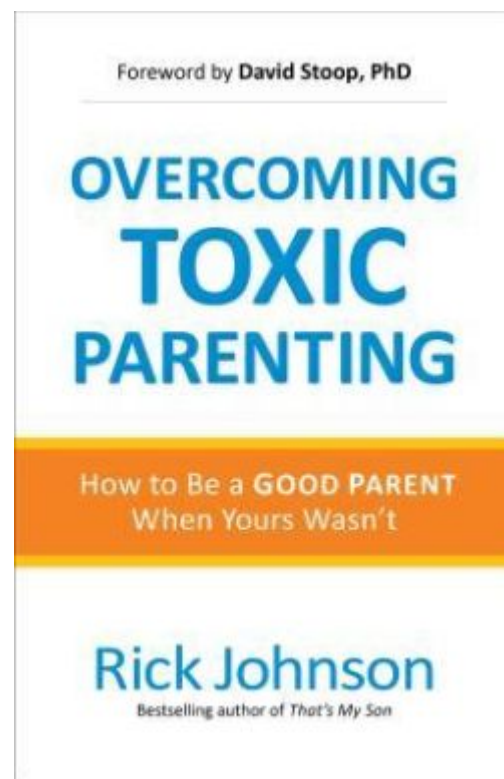


Rick Johnson – Overcoming Toxic Parenting: Book Review

Book Review by Debbie Hemmens



This is another book that I would love to rename, because while it deals very aptly with content relating to the title, there is so much more in it that it kind of needs a title plus a title. I get the privilege of passing on this exciting review of *Overcoming Toxic Parenting* so that maybe you will pick it up, read it and benefit like I did.

Johnson does a brilliant job of explaining how abuse perpetuates abuse as our brain pathways have been set in certain ways if we grew up in an abusive setting. He goes on to say how amazing our brains are that we can create new brain pathways and therefore, new life patterns and we get to be overcomers of abuse and live brilliant lives. We need to be made aware of all this and we get to choose the ending instead of just muddling along in life, feeling sorry for ourselves and doing nothing to change.

Chapters 1 through 5 give great insight into the world of someone who has suffered abuse, with great steps to healing and overcoming. The section on forgiveness is profound and powerful. Carrying around all that bitterness and pain is destructive to us on so many levels. Forgiveness is the choice of strength, not weakness. Then in chapters 6 through 10 Johnson launches into some of the best and healthy parenting advice I have yet to come across. It is good and helpful guidance and this is the part of the book that is lost by the title – every parent should read this section. It is encouraging and inspiring.

When I first started reading this book, this is a Facebook post that I wrote thinking specifically about the South African context, but would apply anywhere in the world – I could rename this book ‘overcoming toxic governments – how to be a good, healthy, thriving citizen when your government has been toxic, oppressive and abusive.’ It’s all the same principles about taking ownership of your own life, no matter what the past dished out to you.

I love how it points to dealing with your past, action steps to healing and then new strategies for a better future going forward – all this can happen personally without changing the toxic parents/government. Then there will be strength to tackle what needs to change in systems and society. We need whole people, each and every citizen, who are dealing with their stuff. We need those action steps and new strategies for restoration to happen. I see this as a huge part of the process in looking to the future. I know that too many people are still living in toxic environments and that needs to change, but it is a both/and scenario because emotional and psychological healing is vital.

I gained so much from *Overcoming Toxic Parenting* and would wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who identifies with all I have mentioned above which pretty much puts it as a book for everyone. You will be blessed as you read and digest.