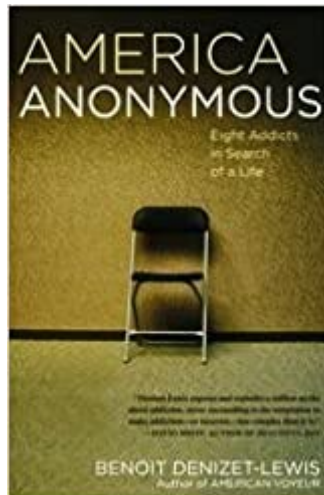




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# **America Anonymous: Eight Addicts In Search Of A Life**



## Synopsis

AMERICA ANONYMOUS is the unforgettable story of eight men and women struggling with addictions. For nearly three years acclaimed journalist Benoit Denizet-Lewis immersed himself in their lives as they battled drug and alcohol abuse, overeating, and compulsive gambling and sexuality. Alternating with their stories is Denizet-Lewis's candid account of his own recovery from sexual addiction and his compelling examination of our culture of addiction, where we obsessively search for new and innovative ways to escape the reality of the present moment and make ourselves "feel better." Addiction is arguably this country's biggest public-health crisis, triggering and exacerbating many of our most pressing social problems, from crime to child abuse and neglect. But while cancer and AIDS survivors have taken to the streets and to the halls of Congress demanding to be heard, millions of addicts talk only to one another in the confines of anonymous Twelve Step meetings. Through the riveting stories in this book, Denizet-Lewis shines a spotlight on addiction and breaks through the shame and denial that still shape our understanding of it and hamper our ability to treat it. As these eight addicts stumble, fall, and try again to make a different and better life, Denizet-Lewis records their struggles, and his own, with honesty and empathy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, an estimated 23 million Americans are hooked on drugs or alcohol, representing an annual economic loss of \$524 billion. Millions more have become enslaved to other compulsive behaviors: overeating, sex, gambling and shoplifting. In his

first book, Denizet-Lewis follows eight average Americansâ "including an athlete and a grandparentâ " who are struggling with addiction. The author covers three years in the lives of his subjects, portraying them with candor and compassion, giving these compulsions a more human face by telling the story of his own sex and pornography dependence, for which he twice sought inpatient treatment. This book provides an intriguing glimpse into the brain of an addict and the new hit or miss treatmentsâ "dopamine blockers and antieuphoria medications. While the excerpted e-mails and taped monologues might test the reader's patience, Denizet-Lewis is a compelling storyteller, and his wide-range of stories of addiction, relapse and recovery far exceeds other books in the genre. (Jan.) Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

"I couldn't put this book down. I was blown away by the remarkable cast of characters, who come fully alive in Benoit's gentle hands. He exposes and explodes a million myths about addiction, never succumbing to the temptation to make addiction -- or recovery -- less complex than it is. This unforgettable book is far more than a compilation of irresistible, artfully told stories about addicts. It's about truth, healing, survival, and hope." -- David Sheff, author of *Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction*"Benoit Denizet-Lewis writes with an impressive mix of transparency and compassion about the addict's eternal battle between will and action. He sees deep into the sadness of desperate people, and equally deep into the systems that redeem such sadness. This is an intimate, compelling volume." -- Andrew Solomon, author of *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*"This book reaches into the dark depths of the heart and soul of addiction by telling the stories of people who have struggled to find their way into the light of healing. It is a collage of potent experiences from ordinary people -- women and men caught in the web of addiction whose fight for recovery will inspire anyone who reads Benoit's book." -- William Cope Moyers, author of *Broken: My Story of Addiction and Redemption*"One of the best books I've read in the last year, and one of the most powerful I've encountered about addiction." -- Rachel Kramer Bussel, *The Huffington Post*"A dazzling portrait of eight addicts and their intimate, sometimes heartbreaking struggle... Addicts will read this book; those who want to understand addiction should read it!" -- Susan Cheever, *The Daily Beast*"An arresting, personal glimpse into the merciless world of drug and behavioral addiction. All eight of the people (Denizet-Lewis) followed are gripping subjects, and he describes their plights in seasoned, dexterous prose." -- *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)"A graceful, compelling book focusing directly on people, not on concepts or proscriptive ideas. Denizet-Lewis relates their successes, relapses, and struggles to stay clean with warmth, clarity,

and a deeply refreshing, unpuritanical frankness." -- Kate Christensen, ELLE "I was skeptical about another book about addiction, but Denizet-Lewis finds a fresh, provocative approach to the subject... I often felt like I was right there listening to the conversations. And, boy, was I paying attention." -- Rochelle Olson, Minneapolis Star Tribune "Engrossing... Denizet-Lewis gives readers a sense of the ravaging power of addiction." -- Vikas Turakhia, Cleveland Plain Dealer "America Anonymous makes for addictive reading." -- Johnny Diaz, Boston Globe

In 1956, the American Medical Association declared alcoholism to be a disease. But today, most Americans still disagree with that classification. And what's an even bigger stretch for them is to believe that sex, overeating, and even shoplifting addictions are diseases also. But that's the point Benoit Denizet-Lewis makes in "America Anonymous: Eight Addicts in Search of a Life". "America Anonymous" follows the lives of eight people in and out of recovery from various addictions over a three year period. Previously, I had no problem believing that alcohol and drug addiction is a disease. I mean, who am I to argue with the AMA, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, and the World Health Organization? But shoplifting? I do believe that alcohol and drug use is only a symptom of the disease. But if it can manifest itself in that fashion, then why not in other destructive behaviors such as gambling, sex, and overeating? Denizet-Lewis also points out, as I have experienced, how abstaining from one addictive behavior, without treatment, can cause an addict to switch addictions. It's like a rug with a wrinkle in it. If you push the wrinkle down, it just pops up somewhere else. I've witnessed this in prison numerous times. The addicts become addicted to religion, exercise, or anything that allows them to escape and avoid the painful and uncomfortable feelings that are only amplified in prison. "America Anonymous" examines addiction from many perspectives and dispels many myths along the way. It's a call to arms for recovering addicts to step out of the shadows and demand better and more readily available treatment for the still sick and suffering. If you need some inspiration to come out of the church basements and break the shackles of shame and stigma, then read "America Anonymous" now. David Allan Reeves Author of "Running Away From Me"

Denizet-Lewis gives powerful first-hand accounts of a variety of addictions as eight addicts are interviewed, and their day to day struggles in and out of recovery are explored. As a recovery compulsive gambler and alcoholic, the stories resonated with me. I also have experienced the loss of a loved one as the result of her gambling addiction. Addictions kill! First our spirit and our soul, and then, left untreated, they can take our lives! My sister died as a result of an overdose related to

her gambling addiction. Jody's expression of frustration that 'we still have the idiotic notion that addicts somehow brought their addiction upon themselves'....and addicts "just need to grow some willpower and pull themselves together by the bootstraps" really resonated with me. He went on to say that "as long as addiction is only the PERSON'S problem, and not our collective problem, then they (insurance companies and politicians) don't have to do anything about it." Most poignant...Jody's sentiment that "We can build a better system, or we can continue to bury our children" hits home. A must read for anyone struggling with addiction, in recovery and their family members and treatment therapists. A powerful read.

I loved this book. It was required for my addiction class, but I flew through it. I loved following the journey of all of the addicts and how they overcame their addictions. I even went out and bought Benoit Denizet-Lewis' other book.

If you want to take a closer look at the many faces of addiction, this is your book. Well written and captivating, each story is a mirror onto the world of addictive behaviors. I highly recommend it, you have nothing to lose, right? R. Williams, co-author of The Mindfulness Workbook for Addiction.

Not since reading John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*, have I had the privilege of looking at the un-glossed subject of addiction. In a style reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence, Benoit Lewis unfolds a current and cutting look at addictions and addicts as they lead their lives in today's America. Highly recommended for audiences young and old, this book left me with a clearer understanding of the way things are in contemporary American Society.

I thought there would be some "breakthrough" insight from reading this book on what parts of the brain are affected by addiction, treatment for it based on that new information. It is a story of how banal addiction has become for its victims. It is tiring to read the same story over and over - the desperation, the acting out, the bleak environmental conditions the addicts find themselves in. I am always struck by the supposed intelligence of the addict. A person who uses their intelligence wonders and marvels at the working of their own brain. Addicts seem to lose sight of their own fascinating qualities as individuals. They become part of a soupy society that all acts the same way with the same outcome. It takes a certain kind of courage to swim your way out of the soup, but none of these characters learned to delight in their own individuality. They see themselves primarily as addicts, through and through. I was sad when I finished reading the book. Sad that the author

offered little celebration for the people he wrote about. It is a sad book, in my opinion.

As a recovering shoplifting addict since 1990 and as an addictions therapist and author myself, I am immensely impressed and gratified by Mr. Denizet-Lewis's new book "America Anonymous." He shares about his own background as a recovering addict but, more importantly, plumbs the depths of the lives of 8 other American addicts in recovery as well. I'm particularly pleased that he covers some of the lesser-surveyed addictions such as shoplifting. This book offers something for everyone--addict and non-addict alike. In addition to the in-depth stories, Mr. Denizet-Lewis gives historical perspectives on addiction and treatment as well as more contemporary and future trends. His writing style is engaging and evocative. The book reads in equal parts as novel and treatise. I can't recommend highly enough this offering.

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