

PRAISES FOR CHOSEN FAMILY

“Be the change you wish to see in the world” and “Lead by example”. It is easy to agree with these sentiments, but anyone who has tried to fully live up to them knows that it is not simple. This is especially true for how we are socialized to be ‘male’ and ‘female.’ Tom Weiner’s book offers us many powerful lessons for those of us interested in ‘untying the gender knot’ that has resulted in our feeling limited and constrained by societal gender expectations. The book provides powerful testimonies from men and women who have participated in all-male or all-female gender consciousness raising groups and who have sought to do the necessary work to “be the change”. The process of transformation, the essential role of empathic others in supporting our efforts, and the stages, processes, benefits and challenges of men’s and women’s support groups are amply demonstrated. This collection of powerful testimonies – expertly organized and commented upon by the author – will help us to walk our own gender transformation journeys as well as to assist those who are already in support groups, or thinking of joining or forming one, to learn from the lessons and valuable experiences of the others in this book who have done so.

Alan Berkowitz is a gender justice activist and scholar who developed one of the first all-male rape prevention programs. His deep and loving relationships with other men serve to confirm the insights and lessons offered in this book.

Tom Weiner offers a deep look from two generations of men and women at the social contribution of support groups. This work is essential for helping generations interlace so that we are making common cause together. I led a consciousness-raising group in the early 1970’s and *CHOSEN FAMILY MEN’S & WOMEN’S SUPPORT GROUPS AN INSIDE LOOK* provides a way for others to learn how they are life-changing. The depth of sharing each participant offers in their interviews creates a living document that taken together shows how we can experience solidarity and stand by each other in a way that makes all the difference.

*Sarah Pirtle, author of five social justice books including **An Outbreak of Peace** about undoing racism.*

Long before the #MeToo movement jumpstarted an urgent campaign demanding men unflinchingly look at how we behaved in relationships, some men had already begun examining their inner lives. Recognizing the power of women’s consciousness-raising groups, they formed men’s groups where they could learn the benefits of not struggling in isolation but receiving (and giving) support in the

company of other men. In a world torn apart by gender inequality, Tom Weiner's book provides both practical information and life-enhancing insights for all genders to become better supports for one another as we cross uncharted landscapes leading from uncertainty to understanding; from distrust to connection.

*Rob Okun, editor of Voice Male magazine and the anthology, **Voice Male: The Untold Story of the Profeminist Men's Movement.***

My own group has been so deeply supportive and life-changing and I was inspired to see how true that was for all the other contributors to Tom Weiner's important book. I think it takes a village to heal and support a person. No one should have to do it alone. While for some, family is the ultimate refuge from the difficulties in life, it is important for people to know that we can create alternative families, powerful groups of friends who love and challenge us to be the best we can be. This book shows us the possibilities for creating deep and powerful bonds in a circle of friends.

*Sara Elinoff Acker, women's group member and author of **Unclenching Our Fists: Abusive Men on the Journey to Nonviolence.***

Tom Weiner's latest book captures the ways in which men in particular have struggled with forging intimate connections with one another in order to be able to express a wider range of emotions. He lays out a model for the ways in which men can gain skills in being open, honest and supportive with themselves and one another as well as demonstrating that there are no age or gender limitations since he has included both women and younger and older examples of thriving groups. As a Swedish therapist who has seen my share of shut down men, this book encourages me to think of the ways men can assist one another in reaching their potential.

Henry Wising, Clinical Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Göteborg, Sweden.