



Surviving Alex

A Mother's Story of Love, Loss, and Addiction

by Patricia A. Roos

DESCRIPTION

In 2015, Patricia Roos's twenty-five-year-old son Alex died of a heroin overdose. Turning her grief into action, Roos, a professor of sociology at Rutgers University, began to research the social factors and institutional failures that contributed to his death. *Surviving Alex* tells her moving story—and outlines the possibilities of a more compassionate and effective approach to addiction treatment.

Weaving together a personal narrative and a sociological perspective, *Surviving Alex* movingly describes how even children from “good families” fall prey to addiction, and recounts the hellish toll it takes on families. Drawing from interviews with Alex's friends, family members, therapists, teachers, and police officers—as well as files from his stays in hospitals, rehab facilities, and jails—Roos paints a compelling portrait of a young man whose life veered between happiness, anxiety, success, and despair. And as she explores how a punitive system failed her son, she calls for a community of action that would improve care for substance users and reduce addiction, realigning public health policy to address the overdose crisis.

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PATRICIA ROOS is a Professor emerita of sociology at Rutgers University. Among her many publications are the books *Job Queues*, *Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations* (coauthored with Barbara Reskin) and *Gender and Work: A Comparative Analysis of Industrial Societies*. After her son's death, she realigned her research and advocacy interests to explore mental health and substance use disorders, turning her grief into activism.

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