

## March Text Study ~

Waldman, A. (2009). *Bad Mother: A Chronicle of Maternal Crimes, Minor Calamities, and Occasional Moments of Grace*. New York, New York: Anchor Books.

One of the questions I hear too often is "I'm I a bad parent?" Each of us are our own worst critic and when it comes to the children in our lives we want to make sure we are doing right by them. This month's text study is Bad Mother, by Ayelet Waldman. I select this book to hopefully remind each of you that being a parent is one of the most difficult jobs, that no one has mastered yet! In her own words, "this book is about the perils and joys of trying to be a decent mother (parent) in a world intent on making you feel like a bad one." Throughout this book she shares her personal experiences through parenthood with:

- Feeling bad about not being about to volunteer at your child's school or feeding your child certain foods or even worse forgetting a snack for your child at the park
- Wondering if you are letting down your younger children by having less video footage or photographs of their life compared to your older children
- How parents often relive their own childhood experiences through their children
- Realizing how your role, specifically as a mother, often defines who you are as a person and that there are different expectations for "mothers" and "fathers"
- Recognizing the changes in your body that you can't control, but welcome in the name of being a "good mother"

She shares her "philosophy" of motherhood or parenthood, being that we must always tell the truth. She describes that in her perspective people should always tell the truth, even when the truth is difficult. She adds that when we pretend things are okay and conceal our emotions that leads to shame and the shame leads to painful hurt. When we name a problem and confront it, it becomes surmountable. Many parents walk around with the shame of feeling like they are bad parents because we are not given the space to admit our concerns or question or address what is right or wrong in regards to parenting practices. Waldman writes this book to empower all parents to begin having these conversations! Waldman wants to see parents having conversations about the difficulties when trying to balance home and work. She wants people to talk about compromises they have made or unfulfillment they feel in their role as a parent. Waldman expresses that parents will feel better about themselves and the job they are doing as parents if they expose and embrace the ugly side of parenthood and recognize there is no such thing as being perfect.

Waldman also shares the realities of how we judge other parents. She shares examples of "bad mothers" that we focus on as "by defining for us the kinds of mothers we're not, they make it easier for us to stomach what we are." In essence, focusing on the bad in others we feel better about ourselves. With this process we also ignore the commonalities that all parents struggle and make choices that they later question. Waldman brings this back to why parents need to have this conversations with one another. Parents need to let the cat out of the bag for one another that this job is hard and that they need one another for support.

So in the spirit of Ayelet Waldman give yourself a pat on the back for venturing down this difficult road of parenthood; make a list of all the amazing things you do each day you're your child(ren); share with a friend a mistake you have made or worry you have about your child; and provide the space for others to share with you.