



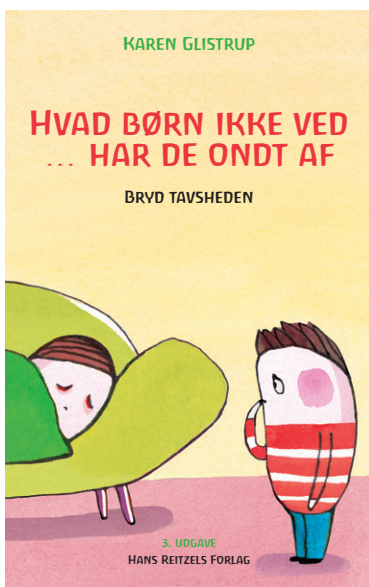
**KAREN  
GLISTRUP**  
Copenhagen Literary Agency

About:  
*What Children Don't Know  
... Hurts*

*This book is nothing short of a miracle — especially for the children and parents who are coexisting with mental illness as a significant member of their families.*

— Jesper Juul

## *What Children Don't Know... Hurts*



**Publisher:**

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**Pages:** 245.

**Original title:** Hvad børn ikke ved...  
har de ondt af

**Rights sold:**

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**Complete German and English  
translation available.**

Children are always involved in what is going on around them. That includes what is not being talked about. This book is for those who are seeking a practical, inspiring approach to talking with children and families about difficult subjects, such as when parents suffer from mental illness.

Avoiding a topic is not good for children, who are trying to understand themselves and make sense of their world. Common justifications given for remaining silent are: “We want to protect our children,” followed by: “They’re too young to understand.” Developmental psychology, neuropsychology, children themselves, and plain common sense have taught us that children have need of clear, empathetic communication about what is going on in their lives. This is especially true when it involves their families.

This book guides and inspires professionals and parents alike to enter conversations that create a new relationship between children and parents, characterized by trust. The book is full of examples from the author’s countless family discussions with mentally ill parents and their children.

# PRAISE for *What Children Don't Know... Hurts*

“We feel greatly honoured to be asked to write a preface of Karen’s work with children whose parent/s have or are suffering from some form of mental illness.

This is a very important book with lots of wisdom! The book will be very valuable to both adult and child therapists and can be highly recommended for everyone working with children who may be confused and concerned about their parents and are often distressed as nobody tells them what is happening. In many ways this has led to a culture of what we could call protecting but is also marginalizing children in our professional services.

In Britain we maybe have a culture of treating children as if they should be protected. Protecting the child means not telling them the details or truth of what might be the problem with their parent. “A British adage is that children should be seen but not heard.” They know they should play quietly as they are too young to have informed opinions. We in particular protect children from talking about horrifying experiences they have been or are going through. The societal discourses around children could be seen as marginalized members of our societies and this is particularly reflected in the way we involve or do not involve, children as important witnesses when working with mental health challenges...

What this book draws attention to, with such sensitivity, towards both the children and parent’s dilemmas, is the suffering, fears and the self-blame these youngsters often develop.

Reassuring them that they should have no responsibility or guilt for anything, but just to appreciate their parents love them dearly even if at the moment that maybe difficult to understand.

Karen has developed a different and potentially very important new approach breaking some of the more conventional ways of working with families when one of the parents has a mental illness.

Karen breaks some of the so-called conventional rules of family therapy by, if possible, only using a single therapist for both the adult and the child, so the child is more likely to get heard and listened to and is more able to ask question about their worries and why their Mum or Dad is behaving in an unusual way.

In this book Karen gives detailed examples of ways of approaching a parent with psychiatric problems/difficulties.

In Britain we need changes in order to implement involvement of children in parent’s mental health. Adult psychiatry will need a lot of coaching to include children in their conversations. Our encouragement would be to work with Child Psychiatric Clinics to adopt and take a lead in this.

Karen’s book is offering new approach breaking ways to make this change in our practice. She invites us to meet children as people whose voices we should hear and pay attention to like any others’.

The wisdom within this book will be immensely helpful to child and adult therapists so that they can help children to understand and not take responsibility or blame for their parent's illness. Children belong to their families. When distressed, we often take them out of these sensitive, loving relationships and focus on them as having problems rather than focusing on them as important carers. We as the adult audience, need to listen to them and include them to be part of the relational voice that is heard and included in all adult mental health work.

This book will hopefully open new ways in the United Kingdom and Worldwide for Adult and Child Psychiatry to work closely together in these very sensitive areas.”

**DR. ELSPETH McADAM**

*Child Psychiatrist, Systemic consultant to children, youngsters, and their families*

**BENEDICTE SCHILLING**

*Cand. psych. aut. MSc, Clinical Child- and Family Psychologist*

**SIMON BURTON**

*MSc Systemic Psychotherapist, Consultant, & Supervisor to children, youngsters, and their families*

“Karen offers much needed insights for parents for how to have honest, authentic and loving conversations with children about difficult topics like mental illness, addiction and other challenging circumstances. Historically, adults thought that it was best to hide these conversations from children because they thought it was better for them, but we now know that this just isn't true. We know that it not only necessary but critical for children to have these honest and trustworthy conversations within their families, one on one, or carefully monitored by a professional.

Children sense very clearly what is going on around them, and when we don't talk about the reality they are living in, they start making things up. Karen gives us the much needed knowledge and language we have been missing as parents and professionals to understand which kids need help and how to talk to them in an honest and loving way. I highly recommend this guide for families and professionals who want to create a strong connection by understanding what is going on with their children and need the tools to be able to talk about it.”

**JESSICA JOELLE ALEXANDER**

*Bestselling author and Danish parenting expert*

## FOREWORD to *What Children Don't Know... Hurts*

This book is nothing short of a miracle – especially for the children and parents who are coexisting with mental illness as a significant member of their families.

Karen Glistrup did her groundbreaking work with families within a traditional psychiatric institution at a time and in a professional culture, which would have kept most people from even trying. Not only has adult psychiatry generally been very conservative but also the common attitude toward mental illness in society tends to be tainted by secrecy, shame and denial. This book and the authors latest books (German titles) are facilitating important changes in this respect.

This book is not about using family therapy within the psychiatric world – although this would be a splendid idea as well. It's about conversations with and within families, carefully monitored by professionals for the benefit of all involved – including the patient and her cares. These conversations often become very therapeutic.

It has been evident for many years, how family secrets are having a strong negative influence on many levels. They make the relationships between everybody distant; they make everybody feel guilty – especially children – whereas adults can justify keeping a secret by convincing themselves that it is better for the child. Eventually – when the secret is revealed – the adults will feel guilty as well; guilt attenuates the vitality and healthy development of children's self-esteem. This book explains how these general effects tend to become even more

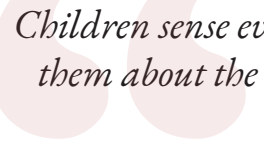
poignant when the relationship in question is one between a child and a mentally ill parent.

Because this kind of secret is so painful for all involved it is a big relief when an experienced professional helps the whole family with starting the conversation – a series of dialogues which are not aimed at the diagnosis of the patient but at improving everybody's well-being. Karen Glistrup's book is an excellent guide for any professional who wants to facilitate openness and demystification.

This book is however not only for mental health professionals but a valuable source of knowledge, experience and inspiration for all adults – pedagogues, teachers, parents and grandparents.

**JESPER JUUL**

*Familytherapist mpf, Author, Ashoka Fellow*



*Children sense everything. This is why we must talk with them about the reality they are a part of – also when it comes to what is painful.*

— Karen Glistrup

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Glistrup is a social worker and a psychotherapist who has specialized in family and couples-counseling for over three decades. Glistrup's work continues along the path forged by renowned family therapist Jesper Juul, and, from this tradition, she has carved out entirely new approaches to topics such as children's mental health and family life.

Today, Glistrup runs a clinic in Denmark where she counsels families and children as well as supervises and teaches professional psychotherapists. Glistrup is active in the international professional community and is a much sought after speaker at conferences around the world concerning child-care and family counseling.

Glistrup's vision is that fewer children in the world should grow up lonely, with feelings of shame and wrongness. Her books provide new insights into the inner lives of children, and inspire a greater sense of trustworthiness, and thereby better relations between adults and children concerning the reality they agree on.

Her Royal Highness the Crown Princess Mary of Denmark supported Glistrup's vision with a warm forward to her bestseller *Talk About It... With Every Child – A Book About Feelings in the Family*.