

CAN YOU HELP ME?

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

A. H. BRAFMAN



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*For Miriam, with thanks
for her inspiration and support*



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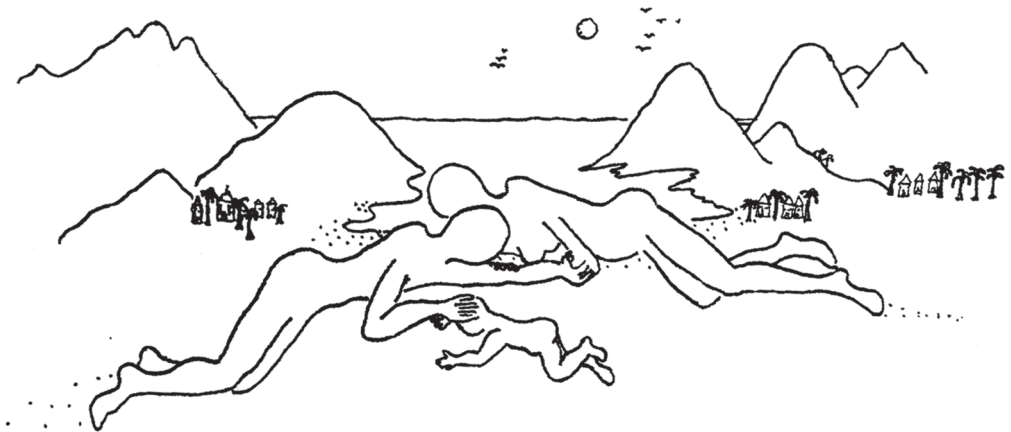
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It was my daughter, Miriam Speers, who conceived the idea for this book. During discussions we had about parenting, she thought I should write down my ideas so that others might benefit from them. She formulated most of the questions and encouraged me to address the challenge of answering them. I am truly grateful to her.

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"A Safe Harbour" by Miriam Speers



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr A. H. BRAFMAN is a psychoanalyst of adults and children. He worked with children and adolescents in the public health service (NHS) for over thirty years. This work and his training in adult and child psychoanalysis helped him to understand the psychology of individuals, but his public and private work with young people led him to recognize the importance of the actual, overt and covert interactions between parents and children. He came to realize that if children can develop pathological features as a result of their upbringing, it was equally true that, given adequate help, parents were also invaluable therapeutic agents.

Besides his private clinical practice, Dr Brafman lectures to medical students and to psychoanalytic and psychotherapy trainees, and he also acts as consultant to organizations caring for children and adolescents. He has previously published *Untying the Knot* (2001, Karnac).



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There are so many books available telling parents how to bring up their children that the question arises: why another one? I want to believe that the present text offers two features that put it in a small minority of the books found in the bookshops. First, it tries to focus on situations as perceived by the child, rather than the usual observer's view of the child's behaviour. Second, it offers only a minimal number of answers. Instead, I have tried to discuss each question in such a way as to open up various possible solutions and leaving the final choice to the parents. This approach is because I have come to believe that finding an answer to a problem is much easier when one understands what relevant issues are involved. Because no two children are completely equal and the circumstances in which parents bring up each child are always changing, I think that an outsider can only give valid advice if he or she actually meets that particular set of parents and children. My intention, therefore, was to stimulate thought rather than to offer answers that, however plausible, might be of no actual relevance to the problems of the individual reader.

In my clinical work with children and parents, I have often found that parents very easily feel that they are being held responsible for their children's difficulties. Most parents already tend to blame themselves for their children's problems, but this becomes a much more painful situation if the professional appears to confirm these anxieties. I have on many occasions recognized that the phrasing of my comments had lent itself to such an interpretation, and I have then tried hard to correct this impression. My basic clinical posture is to believe very strongly that parents tend to be the best source of help for their child. Of course, there are many children who have a constitutional element that predisposes them to developmental problems, and these children need and deserve specialized