

**A KIDS BOOK ABOUT OVERDOSE, by Lee S. Varon, LICSW (a kids book about Press, 2024)**

*Review by Julia Carlson*

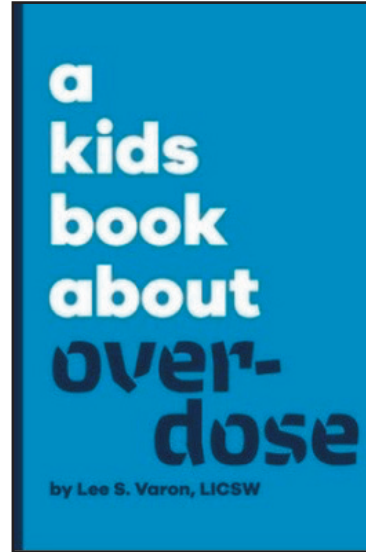
Many of you may know Lee Varon for her fine poetry, but there is another side to her work, which is a focus on addiction. Varon, a clinical social worker, has explored addiction personally in her poetry, but in the last few years she's expanded her work to include fiction and workbooks about this complex subject. *My Brother Is Not a Monster*, a book for young readers from the view of a young girl whose older brother is a drug addict, is a sensitive, realistic rendering of addiction in a family. This story defines addiction, its consequences, and recovery. It is a hopeful story.

Now Varon brings us a workbook, *A KIDS BOOK ABOUT OVERDOSE*, published by a kids book about Press ([akidsco.com](http://akidsco.com)). This press focuses on topics like hope, feelings, relationships, and safety for a young audience. Like many of their releases, they suggest grownups and kids read it together. Overdose is a scary topic, even for adults, but anyone who has had to deal with addiction, whether personal, familial, professional, or social, knows that overdose is part of addiction's fabric. Failure to quickly identify and treat it can lead to death.

Varon has done an excellent job defining overdose - drugs that can cause it, what addiction is, what overdose looks like, and what to do if you are unfortunate enough to witness one. There's a detailed description of what happens during a 911 call, including how to administer Narcan. This might be too much information for a younger child (this book is recommended for 5-9 years of age). In fact, this is why it's suggested the book be read with a parent/caregiver.

The end of this book focuses on feelings that might arise after witnessing an overdose - fear, anger, sadness, confusion, guilt, and anxiety. Varon explains and normalizes how to deal with feeling helpless after such a terrifying event. There's also a "to-do" list of suggestions to help keep your home safe and our kids aware of what to do in an emergency.

It's a sad commentary indeed, when thousands of Americans, of all ages, have died due to drug overdose in the last 5 years, that Narcan, which reverses overdose, is now stocked in many restrooms, schools and public libraries, and in fact, that this book has even been written. However, I believe it's important for this information to be out in the public domain. Keeping addiction, a secret doesn't help anyone. During my 25 years working in addiction, and especially with families and children, there were too many times when addiction reared its head. Children were often faced with situations like caregivers missing in action, arrested, passed out in the bathroom from an overdose, or worst case, dead. The



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outcome was not always positive and the children were left to suffer the effects.

It's obvious that the fight against addiction needs to continue - so much needs to be done. Treatment for rehabilitation and recovery, as well as general education about addiction, needs to be accessible on a wide scale. This workbook is a positive addition to the battle and should be in every school and public library.