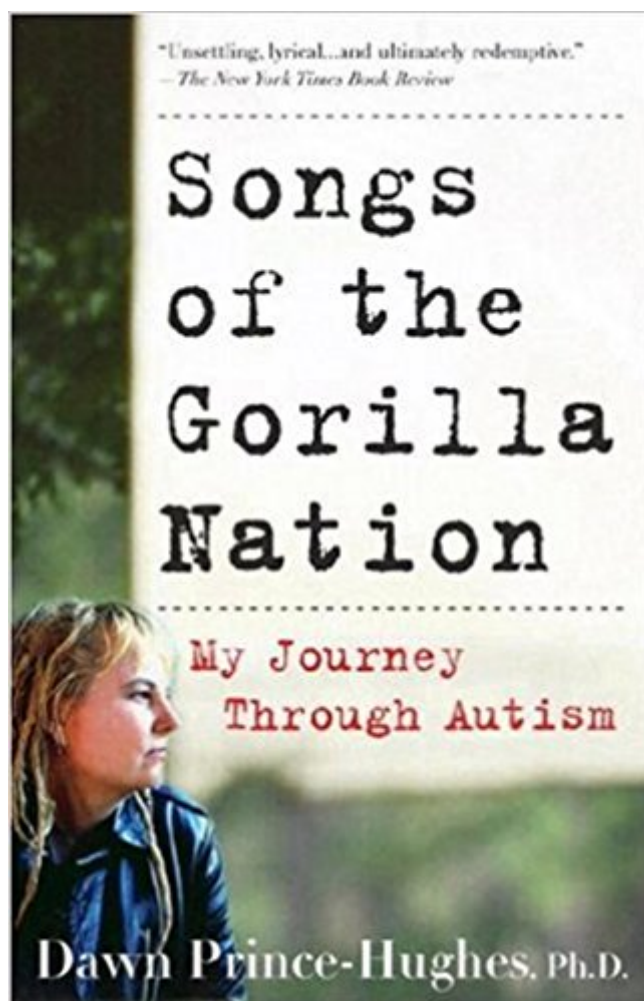


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# Songs Of The Gorilla Nation: My Journey Through Autism



## Synopsis

“This is a book about autism. Specifically, it is about my autism, which is both like and unlike other people’s autism. But just as much, it is a story about how I emerged from the darkness of it into the beauty of it.” In this elegant and thought-provoking memoir, Dawn Prince-Hughes traces her personal growth from undiagnosed autism to the moment when, as a young woman, she entered the Seattle Zoo and immediately became fascinated with the gorillas. Having suffered from a lifelong inability to relate to people in a meaningful way, Dawn was surprised to find herself irresistibly drawn to these great primates. By observing them and, later, working with them, she was finally able to emerge from her solitude and connect to living beings in a way she had never previously experienced. *Songs of the Gorilla Nation* is more than a story of autism, it is a paean to all that is important in life. Dawn Prince-Hughes’s evocative story will undoubtedly have a lasting impact, forcing us, like the author herself, to rediscover and assess our own understanding of human emotion.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books; Reprint edition (March 22, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400082153

ISBN-13: 978-1400082155

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 49 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #305,033 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Apes & Monkeys #124 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Social Scientists & Psychologists #305 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Children’s Health > Autism & Asperger’s Syndrome

## Customer Reviews

In this affecting, thoughtful memoir, Prince-Hughes explores how working with gorillas helped her escape the feelings of isolation she encountered as a sufferer of Asperger’s syndrome, a form of autism characterized by difficulties processing stimuli, sensory sensitivity and social awkwardness. Her description of the course of her condition is both delightfully quixotic and terribly sad. Prince-Hughes’s addictions to the smells of purple irises and tin Band-Aid boxes seem harmless

enough, but her inability to emotionally connect to other people has terrible consequences. In high school, she is beaten and harshly abused. Trying to cope, she develops a drinking problem, spends months homeless and takes a job as a strip club dancer to make ends meet. A lifeline comes after a trip to the zoo, where the author discovers gorillas and forms a bond with them that changes her life. These creatures see the world the same way Prince-Hughes does: "They didn't look at one another, and they did look at me, they looked at everything." She gets a low-level zoo job and decides to make a career out of studying gorillas. By quietly, calmly watching the gorillas interact, Prince-Hughes learns about emotions like love, anger, concern and humor—feelings she could never understand in the purely human world. The author's favorite gorilla, a 500-pounder named Congo, becomes more of a friend than a subject, at one point literally giving her a shoulder to cry on. Although Prince-Hughes goes on to earn a Ph.D. in anthropology, she still struggles with verbal and physical interactions. In print, however, she finds touching eloquence and clarity. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

This memoir tells how Prince-Hughes learned to manage her form of autism, Asperger's syndrome, by observing and interacting with gorillas. This "high-functioning" form of autism regularly goes unrecognized because sufferers are often gifted intellectually and learn numerous coping mechanisms. The author's accounts of her early childhood are intensely moving as she describes how she viewed her world and how she tried to deal with it. What makes this book unique is the author's discovery of the gorillas at Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, and how she learned about personal relationships, the need for companionship, and the need for a group to belong to by watching them. Though she dropped out of school at 16, wanting to learn more about the gorillas helped her to find a focus and led to an eventual Ph.D. in anthropology. The reader will feel what the author is feeling, and her comparisons of herself with the gorillas she grew to love are fascinating. An excellent addition to any library's collection about autism, this will also resonate with all who understand the human-animal connection. Nancy Bent Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This is one of the most moving books I have ever read. For anyone with an interest in high functioning autism, this straightforward autobiography of a talented writer and highly introspective woman who suffers from high functioning autism, cannot be matched - not by Temple Grandin, or anyone else. She gives voice to the voiceless, hope to the hopeless and expresses her feelings in a way that is very touching. This should be a film.

A really good thought provoking memoir. That is really all I can say about this amazing book! You really should check it out. I rate this book a 10 out of 10. It is a book that will definitely make you think. It is about one woman's journey through autism. She wasn't diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder until late in life. However, she was able to manage to become more social and work through her social awkwardness when she started working with the gorillas. I'm highly impressed with this book.

Wonderfully written! Gave me a whole new take on Aspergers. I found it especially interesting as it was written by a gay female. Such an honest memoir of her journey through discovering herself in the world through an amazing resource.

Great window into the world of an autistic person. Well written and definitely worth your time to read.

I am very interested in the wide spectrum found in Autism. The author was able to give the reader a idea of what it is like to walk in her shoes so to speak. Along with Temple Grandin she has helped the public understand a bit more about the syndrome and perhaps given many people encouragement for a brighter future.

I found the story interesting, yet somewhat tedious. I would have preferred more of the author's personal journey rather than clinical information about autism. Perhaps I wasn't the best audience; obviously families and people affected by autism would appreciate the book a lot more.

I particularly liked Prince-Hughes early emotions toward gorilla and how she was able to develop herself. Elaine Starkman, Walnut Creek, CA

This book is fascinating, moving and very informative for anybody who is interested in autism and in animals. Since I am both, I enjoyed it immensely. It's comparable with Temple Grandin's 'Thinking in Pictures' with whom Dawn Prince-Hughes shares many deep insights and experiences. She writes beautifully, and her experiences are worth contemplating because they are far reaching and important. Reading this book strengthened my conviction that many people with autism have insights that could benefit us all, and deserve to be listened to carefully, and with great respect. This book is a must for everybody remotely interested in autism or primates, but I should wish it to reach

as many readers, especially anthropologists! as possible.

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