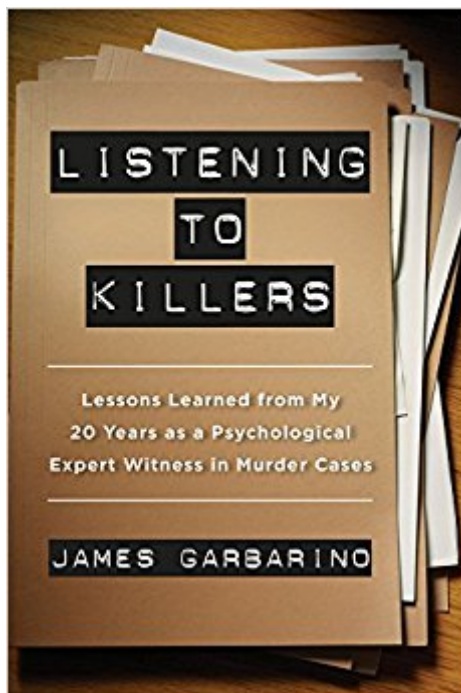


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# Listening To Killers: Lessons Learned From My Twenty Years As A Psychological Expert Witness In Murder Cases



## Synopsis

Listening to Killers offers an inside look at twenty years' worth of murder files from Dr. James Garbarino, a leading expert psychological witness who listens to killers so that he can testify in court. The author offers detailed accounts of how killers travel a path that leads from childhood innocence to lethal violence in adolescence or adulthood. He places the emotional and moral damage of each individual killer within a larger scientific framework of social, psychological, anthropological, and biological research on human development. By linking individual cases to broad social and cultural issues and illustrating the social toxicity and unresolved trauma that drive some people to kill, Dr. Garbarino highlights the humanity we share with killers and the role of understanding and empathy in breaking the cycle of violence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First, I want to commend the author on his pursuit to understand and learn from those who kill. Our society is too busy making stricter laws and longer prison sentences, treating the effect and not the cause. Compassion is easy when you share similar values and backgrounds, but not so easy when you don't. Yet, this is precisely when compassion is most needed. This book isn't quite what I expected. While the author spends a lot of time listening to killers, we don't. He shares many stories, but they are in the form of short case studies. Most of what we learn about them comes to us filtered and dispersed through the author's narrative. The content is also structured in a way that sometimes scatters the information for each case among multiple chapters. This makes it a little

harder, at least for me, to really follow and understand the roots of each killer. All of the cases featured here are young males and females, having killed in their teens or young adulthood. These aren't the hardened criminals most people imagine murderers to be. I was pleasantly surprised by this, because it's a subject that desperately needs attention. The author's explanation of what he calls the "war zone mentality" is compelling. This is a topic I would love to see gain further attention. I want to emphasize that, while the author wants us to understand these killers, he is not asking us to give them a free pass. Compassion and empathy does not mean a get-out-of-jail-free card. But locking a 14-year-old child away for life in an adult prison is also not the answer. What we are doing is obviously not working. These children aren't born killers. Identifying and treating the problems early, before the killing starts, is a first step we absolutely must take.

James Garbarino's new book, *Listening to Killers* offers additional insight into how abusive caregivers, parents and a toxic society create people who kill. It is astonishing that policymakers do not react in a proactive manner to what Garbarino details in this chilling but highly moving account of what makes a person become a killer. Garbarino is one of the nation's leading experts on emotional abuse and how it affects our children. Garbarino uses the metaphor of a killer as basically a scared, traumatized child living inside a scary looking man. Using an ecological perspective on human development, Garbarino offers the reader insight into how context plays an important role in human behavior – something to often overlooked in a state system which is essentially reactive to crisis instead of proactive. And what the author writes about are people at the tip of an iceberg who become killers. The silent majority live out lives of misery and suffering below the surface. As Henry David Thoreau so famously stated in his book *Walden*, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." He was writing about men who have been ignored, rejected, isolated, degraded, terrorized, exploited and corrupted and who often have little if any awareness that they have been mistreated. They are homeless within themselves and operate with no sense of self. This can lead to devastating consequences, the most tragic being what Garbarino writes about in *Listening to Killers*. To bring about change parenting and emotional literacy classes need to be taught within our public school systems where each student would earn a parenting certificate upon graduation.

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