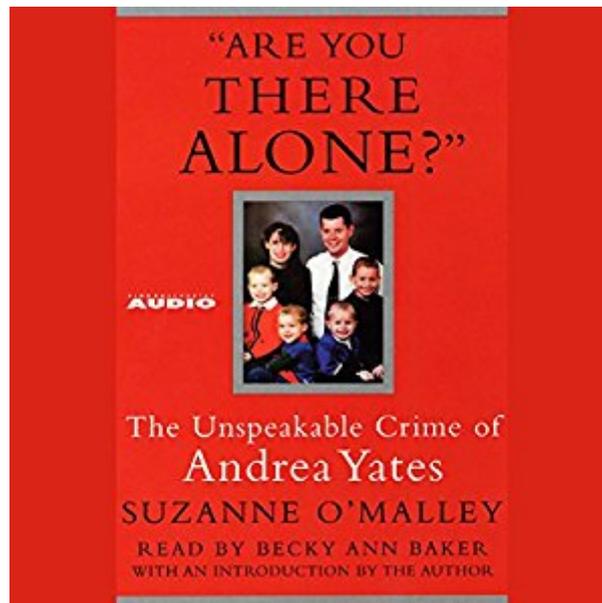


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# Are You There Alone?: The Unspeakable Crime Of Andrea Yates



## Synopsis

In the tradition of *In Cold Blood*, *The Executioner's Song*, and *A Civil Action*, Suzanne O'Malley exposes the human mystery of the most horrifying crime in recent history and the legal drama surrounding it. As a journalist, Suzanne O'Malley began covering the murders of Noah, John, Paul, Luke, and Mary Yates hours after their mother, Andrea Yates, drowned them in their suburban Houston home in June 2001. Over twenty-four months, O'Malley interviewed or witnessed the sworn testimony of more than a hundred participants in this drama, including Yates herself; her husband, Rusty Yates; their families; attorneys; the personnel of the Harris County district attorney's and sheriff's offices; medical staff; friends; acquaintances; and expert witnesses. O'Malley argues persuasively that under less extraordinary circumstances, a mentally ill woman would have been quietly offered a plea bargain and sent to an institution under court supervision. But on March 12, 2002, Andrea Yates was found guilty of the murders of three of her five children. She is currently serving a life sentence and will not be eligible for parole until 2041. O'Malley's exclusive personal communications with Andrea Yates and her interviews with Rusty Yates allow her to offer fully realized portrayals of people at the center of this horrifying case. In "Are You There Alone?" O'Malley makes a critical contribution to our understanding of mental health issues within the criminal justice system. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 7 hours and 3 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Abridged

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Audio

Audible.com Release Date: May 12, 2004

Language: English

ASIN: B00029D11C

Best Sellers Rank: #19 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events > Current Events #50 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Postpartum Depression #427 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Mental Illness

## Customer Reviews

Have you noticed how it is that when you mention the name "Andrea Yates" people's jaws go slack? Wait 'til you read this book. It is SO good. Not sensationalized at all. It doesn't have to be. The facts

are sensational enough. The author, Suzanne O'Malley, has used interviews with Yates by various psychiatrists, interviews with her husband, mother and dozens of others as well as the court transcripts and letters from Andrea Yates herself to the author to tell the story. Apparently, O'Malley is the only reporter to have carried on a correspondence with Yates from her cell in prison. (Would love to read the entire letters and not just the excerpts in the book - wow!) What I like, is that the writer does not intrude on the subject - it tells itself seemingly effortlessly. Just every now and then, like one of the classic tragedies - which surely this is - she will very subtly point out something that is so ironic or just plain stupid that you have to laugh out loud. Thank goodness! Anyway, It's terrific. The killing of her children was and is, of course unspeakable" but the depth of her understanding combined with the sensitivity of Yates's portrait makes this an extraordinary book. Read it. You won't be sorry. Truth is, after all, stranger than fiction.

When I first heard about Andrea Yates horrible crime I was living in Houston, and like most of my friends thought she was a cold blooded killer. I mean, it takes a while to drown five kids - how could she have done that? I figured at some point after the first or second you would have to comprehend what you were doing and STOP - how could she do all five? I am a mother (of only one, however) and I have been hospitalized for depression and bipolar and I know I couldn't do that to my child. But my illness was not nearly as severe as Mrs. Yates disease. This book dispels some of the rumors and puts Mrs. Yates into a more sympathetic light. Under Texas law, she knew that her acts were wrong, but, in her psychotic frame of mind, she believed she was taking the best course of action available to her. This book makes a compelling argument for mental health care reform - if Mrs. Yates had received anything close to the kind of help she needed, her children would almost certainly be alive today. If her problem had been physical rather than mental, her children would be alive and she would be a well woman. If anything, this book showed me that there are two sides to every coin, and that even though I myself have been the recipient of poor mental health care, it is still easy to blame the patient. This story has no clear cut right or wrong, but does show that health care in this country should be governed by the patients illness, not the amount of care their insurance will cover.

this is a fairly well-written book. I have two problems with it though. First off, quotes from Andrea Yates are dropped in the text willy nilly w/ no rhyme or reason. They are inset from the text but don't appear to have anything to do with what is being talked about. Quotes from Andrea could be very interesting if they were within some context but that is not the case. The bigger problem to me is how

pro-Rusty this book is. On the one hand, I do think he loved his children and he did try to get his wife some psychiatric help (e.g., he administered meds, took her in for visits) but overall I think he bears a good bit of responsibility for the following reasons....Rusty is the one who introduced Andrea to the holy-rolling street-preaching couple who taught that women should not be the wives of their husbands, but instead their servants- who taught that women are all to blame for Eve's sin- and who taught that bad mothers are "Jezebels" who should kill themselves rather than lead their children astray (i.e., resort to violence). These people became Andrea's mentors and Rusty introduced her to them. Also, Rusty moved his family into a bus to "live light"- Andrea was raising four kids in trailers and buses w/ no running water and the kids had to sleep in the hold. No doubt this contributed to her stress and psychotic break. And long after she gave signs of being depressed, suicidal and psychotic, Rusty kept impregnating her (at least two of the kids after she started having issues). In short, Rusty, the sane one in the relationship, does bear some responsibility for this whole situation but the author is at pains to demonstrate what a "nice guy" he is. Meanwhile Andrea's doctors are nailed to the wall and held responsible! So yes, I think this book is a bit biased.

Psychology in general has always been interesting to me. I am getting my minor in Psychology currently. I was shocked and sad by the terrible, horrific story of the Yates children. This book was impossible to put down. I read the entire book in a day. The author does a wonderful job of telling the story and offering insights not all people are willing or capable of seeing. I definitely recommend this book to anyone who wants a better understanding of the case and the disturbing story. It does a wonderful job of making Mrs. Yates seem human and terribly, terribly let down by the psychological health system in the United States.

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