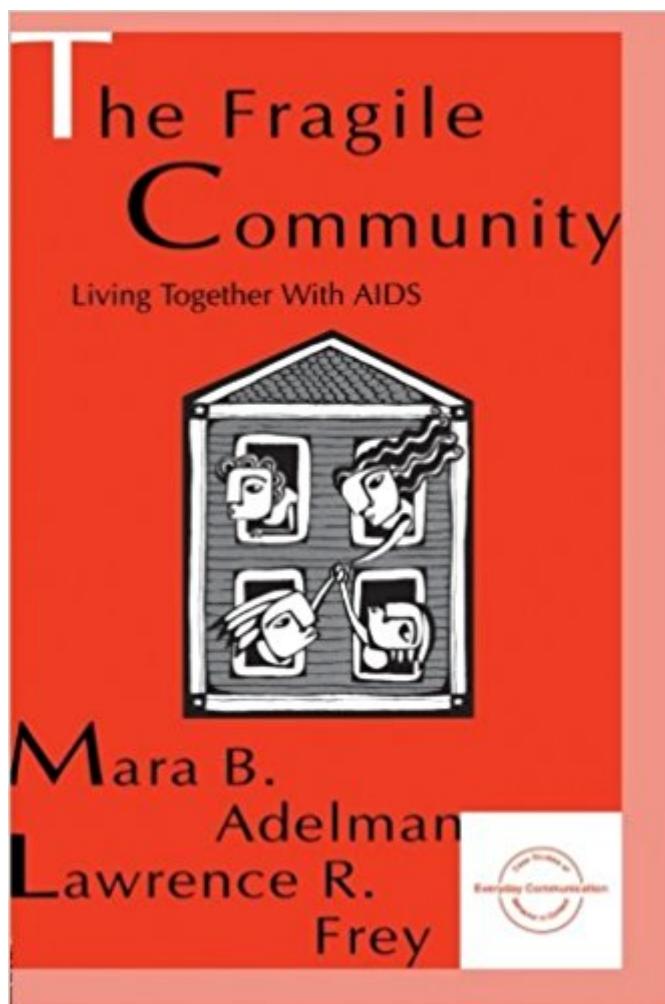


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# The Fragile Community: Living Together With Aids (Everyday Communication Series)



## **Synopsis**

This book examines the concept of "community," focusing on how communication practices help manage the tensions of creating and sustaining everyday communal life amidst the crisis of human loss. While acknowledging how the contradictory and inconsistent nature of human relationships inevitably affects community, this intimate and compelling text shows how community is created and sustained in concrete communication practices. The authors explore these ideas at Bonaventure House, an award-winning residential facility for people with AIDS, where the web of social relationships and the demands of a life-threatening illness intersect in complex ways. Facing a life-threatening illness can defy meaningful social connections, but it can also inspire such ties, sometimes in ways that elude us in the course of daily life. By understanding how collective communication practices help residents forge a sense of community out of the fragility and chaos of living together with AIDS, we are able to better understand how communication is inexorably intertwined with the formation of community in other environments. Based on seven years of ethnographic research including participant-observation, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires, this book weaves together narratives and visual images with conceptual analysis to uncover the ongoing oppositional forces of community life, and to show how both mundane and profound communication processes ameliorate these tensions, and thereby sustain this fragile community. Because the average length of stay for a resident is seven months -- in which time he or she moves from being a newcomer to a community member to someone the community remembers -- the text reflects this short, but crystallized life, starting with the day a new resident opens the door to the day he or she passes away. The writing is rich -- intimate, engaging, personal, compelling, and vivid. The stories told discuss such deeply personal topics as the dilemmas of romantic relationships in a context fraught with many perils; issues of power, authority, and control that enable and constrain social life; and communicative practices that help residents cope with bereavement over the loss of others as well as their own impending deaths. The text concludes by examining the lessons learned from Bonaventure House about creating and sustaining a health community, and serves as an inspiration for strengthening interpersonal relationships and communities in other environments.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

Adelman and Frey take advantage of every opportunity to leave their audience with a splendid reading experience that will prompt one to think about community and communication in new and exciting ways. And as it should be, the reader also will not soon forget the echoes of the voices of the ordinary, but remarkable, men and women who inspired the work-- the residents who live and have lived in the fragile community at [Bonaventure House].<sup>1</sup> •Journal of Health Communication...[this] moving volume clearly exploits the link between community and communication by exploring how communicative practices shape and sustain a system of shared meanings....The result is an intimate look at the tensions inherent between the individual, struggling with the devastation of AIDS, and the community, attempting to sustain and perpetuate itself 'amidst the crisis of loss'...this is an important, insightful volume.<sup>2</sup> •International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships Bulletin...a powerful example of the processes and interpersonal interactions involved in community building...can serve as a vital resource for researchers as well as practitioners, regardless of their theoretical orientation...<sup>3</sup> •Contemporary Psychology The Fragile Community is an elegant ethnography on a very sensitive topic. The authors have managed very well the delicate balance between empathetic understanding of the experience of suffering, on one hand, and analytical insight on the other.<sup>4</sup> •Language in Society Adelman and Frey succeed admirably in offering an empowering vision of community in which dialogue, co-operation and diversity are valued while respecting people's entitlement to independence, autonomy, and privacy.<sup>5</sup> •American Studies

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