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Family & Relationships

Gravity Pulls You in: Perspectives on Parenting Children on the Autism Spectrum
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Woodbine House
978-1-60613-002-5
(February 8, 2010)

Most people have some connection to autism, even if it's only a memory from their childhood of a boy or girl who spent a lot of time on the perimeter of the playground. Too many people have a closer connection—a friend, a child. According to the Autism Society of America, autism spectrum disorders are the fastest growing developmental disability; soon no family will remain untouched.

While the numbers may be bleak, the personal stories and poems in *Gravity Pulls You In* are wonderfully hopeful and authentic. You'll find no false sincerity in these accounts; the writers lay bare their mistakes, their triumphs, their despair and their hope. Their courage is evident on the page.

For instance, B.E. Pinkham shares the difficulty she faced in deciding to send her fourteen-year-old autistic son to a group residence. One day at the beach he tried to keep his younger sister under the water to play and she had to swim away, hard, to keep from being hurt. When Pinkham talked to her daughter afterwards, she admitted her feelings of guilt: "This is what happens when her parents foolishly pretend to have a normal family."

As sad as these stories can be, they're also laugh-out-loud funny. As James Wilson writes in his essay about taking his son on an outing to a Hooters restaurant, "I've found that when all else fails and heads start banging, only dark humor can help me cope." This collection is full of laughter, the kind that arises out of desperation, resignation, sadness, and joy.

Not only do these parents love their children amazingly well, they write amazingly well. Lesley Quinn, for example, using second person point of view in her essay, exquisitely shapes the pattern her thoughts follow when asked by well-meaning colleagues about her daughter: "…she loves listening to movie soundtracks over and over again, and she loves dogs, and she is, in her heroic little body, a huge presence in your hurting and grateful heart, and for 100 percent of her eighteen years, she has been your biggest and most complicated blessing."

Readers both clenched in the grip of autism and those lucky enough to have missed its grasp so far will cherish this collection of writers who are brave enough to share their worst moments along with their best ones.