

A READER'S COMPANION



The Narrow Bridge
PRESS

For Reflection and Discussion

Quotes from A Miracle of the Heart: A Father and Son's Autism Journey

DAVID RAPHAEL & JACOB RAPHAEL

Selected passages from the book, paired where noted with Jacob's own reflections — offered here to prompt conversation, alone or in a group.

*Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyous song.
The seed bearer may plant in tears, but will come home
singing, carrying ample sheaves of grain.*

PSALM 126:5,6

*"Life is enriched by difficulty, love is made more acute when
it requires exertion."*

ANDREW SOLOMON, FAR FROM THE TREE

FROM: A BOY AND HIS AUTISM · WRITTEN BY JACOB

Of course, it's one thing to learn you're autistic. It's another to understand what autism is and what it means to be autistic.

Saying you "cured" autism is like saying you cured being queer or left-handed. When you learn your child has some trait that the world isn't designed to accommodate, including being autistic, you can do two things. You can either force that child to hide their "undesirable" traits, which works for the short term in making them more "socially acceptable," or you can work with them to survive the trials and tribulations the world throws at them. And while my parents were dead set on the latter, even they occasionally slipped into the former.

FROM: ZENO'S PARADOX

Perhaps in the end, it is the holding of hands that counts: being with one another and walking together. Like the Floortime dance of getting juice from the refrigerator, it is the getting there that counts; the elaborate interplay of human interaction, human growth, and human discovery.

Why is Jacob different from any of us? We are all human beings in the making. What makes us human is not only our individual capacity for growth but our shared responsibility and our shared joy in enabling each other to grow.

This is the hope, the joy, and the victory: the great pleasure of each other's company, the delight in the shared journey, and the passion to help each other get there, wherever that place may be.

JACOB REFLECTS

That's the double-sided nature of Zeno's Paradox: there's always more to do, but we're also in a pretty good place right now, and we have that joy available to us. Having the joy of just being together is, in some ways, enough.

FROM THE ESSAY "THE PLACE"

Yet, this profound sadness, compounded by my desperate fear that I was losing my son, became a volatile source of emotional potential energy, desperate to be released. All it required was a path, a means of transforming this potential energy into action. For without such a path, my desperation and sadness would simply feed on itself.

Perhaps this is what our intergenerational emotional package offers us: potential emotional energy waiting to be released into a great kinetic force, enabling us to live and love with great passion.

If we can face the sadness and the hurt that lies in our memories, we can also find the passion to pursue and, hopefully, find hope, joy, and love. Time does not heal all wounds. It is how we choose to spend our time that can.

JACOB REFLECTS

I think that made me think that trauma is, to a degree, a force. And you've got to know how to direct that force. It's not about keeping the force under wraps. It's about knowing what to do with it and recognizing it.

FROM: THE PROMISED LAND

In Hebrew, the Bible reads: "Lech Lecha." Its literal translation is "Go for yourself." Go for your own benefit. But the phrase can also be translated as "Go to yourself." Go to the place where you will find your true self.

Sitting under an olive tree, I came to understand the true lesson of the biblical story of the Binding of Isaac. At some point in our lives, each of us will be tested in a manner that will tear at the roots of all we believe in. We will look down with abject terror on a hell that will bring us unimaginable pain and suffering. But through faith and love, we can find another way. If you will, God will show us another way.

JACOB REFLECTS

Yes, and you have to learn how to live in that wilderness. Maybe you'll have people who will guide you, and maybe you won't.

FROM: THE ROAD TRIP

If there is a lesson I would share with other parents, it is that we all have the capacity to be heroic. We are all potential mythical figures. Feats of greatness are found not only on battlefields of war, in the castles of kings, or on the mountaintops of the gods. Our labors, our struggles, and our victories can be found in the den, the kitchen, and the playground. The greatest adventures of our lives can happen every day.

JACOB REFLECTS

We should be very, very cautious of people who try to "cure" autism, because a lot of "cures" are mostly just trying to make someone mask better when the end goal should be functioning in society in general, instead of us doing all the bending backwards.

People with disabilities have learned to accommodate those without. The comfort of those who are neurotypical is put ahead of those who are neurodivergent.

FROM: LIVING A FLOORTIME LIFE

Every Moment: Floortime calls for this level of hyperawareness at the moments of our lives that truly matter: the time spent with our loved ones, family, significant others, and friends.

Listening — Really Listening: At its essence, it is about following your partner's lead. It is about listening acutely, paying attention not only to words but to affect and non-verbal cues as well. At its core, the Floortime approach is one of validation: what you say matters; your thoughts matter; you matter.

The Power of Play: We rush children to conquer cognitive challenges and hurry them to develop athletic prowess. And in the process, we ignore — or perhaps misunderstand — what play is all about. Open-ended and undirected free play, unbounded journeys of imagination, and trials without an external verdict of error catalyze children's ability to understand and frame their worlds — and our worlds.

What Truly Matters: It is not only Jacob that has grown and developed during this time. Fully engaging in addressing Jacob's challenges and focusing on my capacity to invest in meaningful relationships have made me a better person.

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