

the notion that mothers are solely responsible for familial happiness.

If a critical, social, and political analysis of “Mommy Guilt” is what you are looking for, this book is not for you. If, however, you are seeking practical parenting strategies presented in an interesting and humorous way, you will enjoy this book.

Battle Cries: *Justice for Kids with Special Needs*

Miriam Edelson.

Toronto: Sumach Press, 2005.

Reviewed by Barbara Schwartz-Bechet

As a mother and a professional in the field of special education for over twenty years, I am impressed with Miriam Edelson’s *Battle Cries: Justice for Kids with Special Needs*. Edelson is a well-educated, involved, and resourceful parent who asserts that an individual with a disability is, first and foremost, a person and a family member. Edelson begins her book with a first-person account of her battle for justice and equality for her son Jake, a child with severe disabilities who has since passed away. She describes personal challenges, as well as the obstacles she and her family faced when dealing with individuals and social service agencies. Edelson rightly claims that her best attribute is strength of character. This is evident throughout her book, which is based on extensive research on public policy and private support (see part one) that informs the individual portraits she provides in part two.

Part one describes the “terrain” of the disability realm. Chapters cover topics such as services and supports, the marginalization of mothers who take care of children with disabilities, respite, faith and the community, and how society views individuals with disabilities. Edelson includes factual information regarding services, supports, and policy issues across Canada’s provinces. General tips on how to find services are included at the back of the text; however, a list of contacts, resources, and telephone numbers is a regrettable oversight that would have been invaluable to readers.

Through the voices of mothers and one father, part two presents the “battle cries” of the book’s title. Each portrait presents the story of the child’s birth, life with the family, the education and services that the child and family receive, and how family relationships intertwine with their individual communities. The portraits document the heroism of families who advocate on behalf of their children and show that advocacy and appropriate planning can result in functional lives for disabled children.

Edelson uses her first-hand knowledge of mothering a disabled child and

social policy to focus her narrative and research questions. She identifies the need to balance the private endeavour of cultivating a family and the use of public support that is available—although less available to children with more severe disabilities. She argues that a sense of community—whether family-based, neighbourhood-based, or culturally-based—must complement society’s limited public resources.

A true ethnographic study, *Battle Cries* identifies essential patterns of acceptance, understanding, and growth. Edelson’s heartfelt book is written specifically for families of children with disabilities and those professionals who work directly with them.

Afraid of the Day: A Daughter’s Journey

Nancy Graham.
Toronto: Women’s Press, 2003.

Reviewed by Nancy Gerber

Nancy Graham’s unflinching account of surviving her mother’s depression opens with an epigraph from Jamaica Kincaid’s *The Autobiography of My Mother*: “My mother died the moment I was born, and so for the whole of my life there was nothing standing between myself and eternity.” This unwelcome delivery into loss and pain also describes Graham’s experience: for three months after her birth, on 17 March 1962, her mother was hospitalized for severe postpartum depression that recurred yearly for 20 years.

Martha Bonner, Graham’s mother, was a lively young woman with many friends and interests. Born in 1930 in Hamilton, Ontario, where Graham also spent her youth, Bonner left high school at the age of 16 to help support her family and was working in the accounts department at Hydro Electric when she was introduced to her future husband, Henry Reid, on a blind date. Married in 1958, the couple moved to a bungalow in a neighbourhood of the city where farm fields and apple orchards once stood. Thus far, the story is familiar as the narrative of a young, energetic couple married during the post-war boom, eager for a family and their future. Just a few years later, as Bonner sinks deeper and deeper into depression, the familiar outlines of a suburban childhood are ruptured as Graham enters the terrifying world of mental illness and becomes mother and caregiver to her own mother.

Graham’s narrative veers between the nightmare of psychiatric hospitals and the nightmare of home, where her mother perpetually teeters on the verge of incapacitating depressions. In spite of the considerable grief she feels when