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Book Review

Autism. The sacrifice of a mother

McEwan Freda Xlibris Milton Keynes, UK, 2014, pp. 107.
ISBN 978-1-4990-8614-0 (softcover) and 978-1-4990-8615-7
(e-book)

doi: 10.1111/bld.12165

A mother of a son on the autism spectrum has written this book. The book provides a narrative and reflective account of her son and his journey as a child/young person living with autism. The rationale of the book is to enable readers to understand that she is:

just an act within the script of life...ensuring that Tony - the major character - is in line as scripted and you the spectator are satisfied (McEwan, 2014, p 9).

To this end, Freda [the mother] relates to the reader problems and the successes she has encountered with Tony. Her book illustrates the hurdles and many challenges commonly experienced by families dealing with a diagnosis of autism, and all that that entails. What is clear from the book is that Freda feels that 'society' does not understand autism. In addition, she presents a compelling narrative of society's lack of cognisance of the implications that autism has on families. Furthermore, she argues that the child on the autism spectrum does not understand the negative reactions they encounter from the world they live in.

Freda uses poems to help illustrate how herself and Tony feel about their struggles. These poems are interspersed throughout the book and help to articulate views that might otherwise be difficult to express in text.

The book is written in an informative style. It clearly illustrates the frustrations experienced by families in similar situations. She supports key information with clear

explanations and references, indicating where she obtained her information. This is a good resource for anyone working with children on the autism spectrum, as the families they support may not necessarily be able to share the challenges they are experiencing both at home and elsewhere because of the very personal and intimate nature of such experiences. This book clearly illustrates how life with a child on the autism spectrum might be thought of as a series of hurdles, which can be perceived as more steps 'backward' than steps 'forward'. However, towards the end of the book Freda lists the many skills that Tony has mastered, which shows that it is possible to work with children on autism spectrum to enable them to gain life skills. She does not, however, say that it is the same for all children on the autism spectrum, as clearly each child will be different. The book also demonstrates how society may find some behaviour displayed by some children on the autism spectrum hard to deal with, and the impact this has on families.

Personal accounts such as this are a valuable learning tool. Freda's narrative is very personal in nature. Therefore, the reader perhaps should not judge what she says, and feels about her experiences, but rather use these feelings and experiences to learn how they could apply this to their practice when supporting children on the autism spectrum and their families. Any student on health- or social care courses who potentially works with children on the autism spectrum, and their families would benefit from reading this book. The reader may not agree with all of the content, but they will gain an invaluable insight into the daily struggles and challenges this particular family has encountered.

Laila Paulsen-Becejac
E-mail: laila.paulsen@uw1.ac.uk