

~~Dads of Disability~~ book and education project

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Overview and License

Dads of Disability™: Stories for, by, and about fathers of children who experience disability (and the women who love them) has been useful for genetic counselors, social workers, special education teachers, physicians, psychologists, parents, caregivers, and others. I hope it is a useful tool to foster empathy, discussion, and learning.

This workbook of conversation prompts and writing prompts is packaged with a PDF digital copy of the book in a departmental or institutional license for college and university programs. Please respect that license and abide by your distribution rights. The license allows you to distribute your specific digital PDF version of the book and the workbook to registered students, faculty, adjuncts, or staff in your department or institution for a specific period of time. You can reach the author and editor of this collection at gdietz@garydietz.com

- The purpose of the workbook and the book is to help prompt conversations and writing in academic settings that surround learning about how to support fathers. Thus, the prompts specifically surround fatherhood.
- In no way do I purposely discount the individual with a disability, the mother, the siblings, the grandparents, and others in the community including single sex co-parents and spouses where fathers are not present or where gender roles are not traditional. There are myriad other materials that address the support of other audiences concerning disability and caregiving topics specific to other gender roles.
- As much as I try to be unbiased, I am certain that my own gender, racial, and class biases appear in some of these prompts and questions. As I mention in the introduction to the book, “If there is unintentional offense, please let it start or continue a dialogue, not end one.” You can always drop me a line. I’m always learning, and I hope the same for you!

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Prompts for Foreward and Introduction:

Foreward and Introduction

1. Is this book and the themes in it really needed?
2. Have an honest group discussion about what your pre-conceived notions are about fathers who have children who experience a disability.
3. Do some research and report and discuss why and how many fathers “abandon” the family in one way or another? On how many mothers do this? Are you surprised at the current findings?
4. What is your opinion on “people first” language?
5. Role play as the author having a discussion with a counselor about the fears he mentions about writing this book.
6. Could the existence of this book diminish the role of women in any way, despite the author’s denial of that?

Prompts for Chapter 1:

26 Days

1. Collection author Dietz has said that in the research of this book, it was hard to find African American and Asian American fathers to participate. He spoke with some, but they declined to be included. Why do you think this could have happened?
2. Faith seems to be a theme in many stories in this collection. The author of this particular chapter is a pastor. In what ways, if any, do you think working with a pastor or other clergy as your client could be different than working with someone who wasn't clergy? Wasn't religious at all?
3. Essay author Boyd stated, "While those early days made me a father, they also made a man out of me." What do you think he mean by that? How can you uncover what "being a man" means to specific clients based on their personal backgrounds? How will your experience of fathers and men in your own life impact how you interact with clients? How can you recognize your own biases of this impact?
4. This chapter is the first example in the book of medical professionals giving what may have been interpreted by the father as a negative prognosis. Why might a father experience a prognosis as "desperate"? How would you interact with a client who shared with you they felt another medical professional provided a prognosis harshly? How can you uncover if the prognosis was, in fact harsh, if it was merely interpreted that way by a father, or if the provider could have provided the prognosis in a different way?
5. Why might medical professionals be unprepared to provide prognoses in ways that fathers of a variety of backgrounds can understand and relate to? Should that be a provider's responsibility? If the prognosis wasn't negative, why do you think chapter author Boyd thought it was? How will you approach counseling clients whose newborns have a challenging diagnosis and prognosis?
6. What is the difference between a diagnosis and a prognosis? How does the distinction matter, if at all, when working with fathers?

Prompts for Chapter 2:

The Second Time Around

1. What stereotypes about parents with a significant age difference may impact how you work with the father as a client? What issues are OK and not OK to discuss? Medical? Genetic? Generational? Others? How might each of these vectors impact or not impact your approach to your client?
2. Which issues do you anticipate being hardest to deal with with an “older” father: Medical, genetic, generational, others?
3. Essay author Weiner admitted he was dismissing his wife’s concerns. How would you coach him or his spouse to deal with this denial when it first appeared? How would you advise him about guilt or anger after he realized that there was a challenge present that he was denying at first? How would you advise his spouse? Could you / how could you use a role play with both parents to address this issue?
4. Weiner has some justified anger at “the system.” How do you counsel someone who hasn’t been “listened” to by the system? Do you think the challenge is with how certain parents communicate or do you think there is a challenge with the design of the system, or both? How will you react when a father is “at the end of his rope” and shows unjustified anger toward you?
5. After reading Weiner’s essay, do you think that his being a “second time” parent had the impact on his family’s situation in the way that he appears to indicate it did? Whether you do or don’t agree with the impact of “the second time around” how would you honor his opinion if he were your client?

Prompts for Chapter 3:

Men at Work

1. Essay author Dietz has expressed a frustration about male role expectations and “traditional” responses, especially on social media support groups. How can you as a professional (regardless of or because of your personal gender experiences) express empathy for fathers who can’t express emotion because they aren’t “allowed” to? How can you help normalize emotions like sadness, tears, or depression in a society who often sees these expressions as not “manly”?
2. Do you think that the two executives that saw author Dietz cry used that incident as a reason to see him as weak in the workplace? Do you think it is plausible that Dietz’s tenure at that company was impacted?
3. Page 21 poses questions about the same situation in front of female executives. “I always wonder how that meeting would have gone if I had cried in front of two female executives.” What do you think?
 - 3a) How might the experience have been different? Why? What do you think this could have to do with gender role socialization in our society?
 - 3b) Would the female execs have thought essay author Dietz was condescending to them and treating them as “mother” rather than boss? Did the male executives feel Dietz was treating them as “father” rather than boss?
 - 3c) Would it have made the author seem more human to the female execs and thus would it have made the author’s tenure with them easier?

Prompts for Chapter 4:

Letter To My Son

1. Collection author Dietz identifies with Nester's first stanza when a lactation nurse told him he was just a nervous dad, and that nothing was wrong – when in fact there was. How do we help experienced professionals ride the line between coaching “nervous” dads and dads who sense something that is truly wrong?
2. With a classmate or teammate, role play coaching a dad though what other have called “terrible twos” and how to identify if incidents of “rage” fit within that range.
3. Discuss the last line with your class or team. It doesn't say “what is infirmity,” it says, “what seems infirmity.” Is infirmity the right word? Can it really be a gift? Would discussing an infirmity or challenge as a gift be an approach you would or wouldn't take with a client?

Prompts for Chapter 5:

The Girl with the Trauma Tattoo

1. Discuss your thoughts about the general violence and guilt to which this chapter's title refers to (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*).
2. This is clearly a serious essay but has a lot of humor in it. Does the humor work or does it fail the serious topic to which essay author Kenny addresses?
3. When is or isn't humor appropriate with clients? What kind of humor would you use, and when? When would you avoid humor? If a client brought humor of any kind to you regarding their situation, how would you determine how to respond?
4. Discuss the feelings expressed around the mention of "Discipline Dad" and the woman at school drop off. What would you say to essay author Kenny if you had the chance? To the woman he interacted with at drop off? What could essay author Kenny have said instead, if anything?
5. How would you describe Sensory Integration Disorder and Reactive Attachment Disorder to a first-time parent who has no idea what these things are?
6. If a dad expects a traditional "discipline dad" response by a child and doesn't get it, like essay author Kenny doesn't get from Eva, how can you coach him to adjust his expectations – and his understanding of what daily "wins" are with his child?
7. Discuss how you can help a new father strive toward the optimism that Kenny expresses in this essay, especially in the closing of the essay.
8. Why might people use humor? When is it OK to use humor when discussing disabilities? When is it not OK?

Prompts for Chapter 6:

Coffee, Tea, or God?

1. Should the flight attendant have brought up a religious topic to a passenger? Could she have made her point in a different way? If the father didn't engage at all with the flight attendant, what could have been her reaction and thoughts?
2. In your class, roleplay discussions that you think a dad may experience using people with a variety of religious beliefs. How could the conversation go between the dad and the person if one is religious and the other is not? What if both are religious, but have different belief systems? How can they respect and engage regardless of belief? Perhaps as in the essay, role play a father chatting with a flight attendant. A coffee barista or waiter? Or perhaps a more ongoing relationship: A coworker, neighbor, or teacher?
3. Did the father in this story make a mistake by leaving the young son in the seat by himself? What could the father have done instead?
4. Discuss the idea of predestiny in how you will handle discussions with clients who believe having a child with a disability was "meant to be" but now have tremendous guilt. Will this approach differ if the clients don't believe "this was destined to happen" but feels equally guilty?
5. How would you recommend a father prepare himself for positive comments from strangers that don't align with his beliefs? Not just about how to politely respond but also coaching him on processing those comments after the fact when he has time to think about them. How could a father feel upset in some way about comments even if they were made with good intentions?
6. Roleplay a young father interacting with a woman of a certain generation who believes fathers shouldn't be the sole public caregiver of a young child and asks overly personal questions like "what is wrong with him?" and "where is his mother?"

Prompts for Chapter 7:

Man I Can Be

1. Some men – many? – use the word “strength” to describe their expectations of fatherhood and having a child. How will you best understand your client’s perspectives on strength and weakness and best use that understanding in your work with a father?
2. How will you temper and adjust your own understanding of “manhood”? What techniques will you use to keep an open mind?
3. The word “mourning” appears for the first time in this collection in this essay. Why is “mourning” such a common experience in these fathers? How will you react to that word when you are confronted with it from a client?
4. How is it or how is it not notable that “mourning” appears for the first time in an essay with a title about “manhood?”
5. In what ways can you share the ideas of pride, mourning, and manhood with a client whose child is newly diagnosed using essay author Waitt’s reflections? What kinds of personality traits of your client would you need to ascertain before sharing this kind of essay with them? Or could it be shared with anyone?
6. How could you advise a client about the path from mourning to optimism? When and when shouldn’t you talk to a client about this path? How should or shouldn’t you share optimism with a client whose child is particularly impacted by their diagnosis?

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Prompts for Chapter 8:

55,000 Spectators

1. In 1973 a hospital offered the father the option to “leave the child behind” at the hospital. Discuss this with your team. Does that still happen today, even in an indirect way? Could it happen again? What happens in countries other than the one you currently live in?
2. Essay author Budway articulates a special pride about his son Matt. How would you advise clients with several children to foster connections between the whole family without leaving anyone out?
3. Do you think a father like essay author Budway would have eventually encouraged Matt to play sports if it wasn't for his neighbor's question?
4. Why do you think some dads are less or more likely to help their children with disabilities enroll in sports, arts, scouting, and community events? Is it your role to help them understand the possibilities? If not, why? If so, in what ways?

Prompts for Chapter 9:

Skatepark

1. The direct message in this essay is not to stereotype. Yet, we all do. What techniques can you use to train your own brain to have fewer visceral reactions to visual or other sensory input with your clients?
2. Discuss a time when you made an error in judgement about someone's abilities and how you dealt with that – either in the moment with that individual, later with that individual, or in the future with another individual.
3. What does the saying “assume competence” mean to you? What parallel phrase can you devise to share with a client that means “don't always assume that the person you are encountering will look at you or your child negatively?”

Prompts for Chapter 10:

Great!

1. How can you advise a father to treat accomplishments, no matter “how small”, as true accomplishments?
2. Role play explaining childhood apraxia of speech to a father who may not be as understanding as essay author Keating.
3. Role play working with a father as a client who is having a much harder time than essay author Keating in seeing the utterance of the word “Great!” as something to delight in and be proud of.
4. Write a short piece creating an analogy of Sensory Integration Disorder to something that the general population could quickly understand. Try to do it in 100 words. And then try to do it in 750 words.

Prompts for Chapter 12:

Alone in the World

1. Institutionalization vs community care and home care and family centered supports are a deep, important, and controversial topic. On current social network groups for parents of young and adult children with disabilities, find a “controversial” discussion thread surrounding these topics, and write a 5-page summary on the various points of view you uncover.
2. When you work with a father, that for whatever reason, was not able to care for his young or adult child at all, or anymore, how will you react? What tools do you have, or must you develop, to show empathy for someone who made a decision that you believe you would not have personally made?
3. With your team, discuss the ways in which you can brainstorm reactions to the “staring at the playground” and “asking stupid questions” situations. How could you coach a dad to handle these things, depending on his mood, the child’s abilities, and what is “appropriate” or not in various situations? Include when or when not to use the “say nothing” response.
4. Discuss the ramifications of adoption or live-in guardianship of an individual to the parents or relatives who give up those rights. What are the ramifications to the father who is adopting or gaining guardianship?
5. What are the implications of fathers who have a different racial, religious, or cultural background to an individual in their care?
6. What models do you think are best or worst when an individual needs lifelong care and supports? Do you think your opinion will change over time, and why or why not? Do you think your opinion will change if you have a child with a disability?

Prompts for Chapter 14:

Kind of Heavy

1. Should essay author Lawrence have had that conversation with his son? Should he not? Should he have waited until Duncan was older? An adult? Never have had that conversation? Why?
2. How could you counsel an angry father to redirect his anger in a positive way as the essay author has done? What are techniques you could use, and how would you know which one to use?
3. How could you counsel fathers to help their child with a disability address their anger? What about siblings?
4. How could you address a range of other challenging emotions in a father? Disappointment? Guilt? Frustration? Depression?
5. This essay uses the word “mourning” again. Is it being used in the same or different way than in essay author Waitt’s piece “Man I Can Be?”
6. How, if at all, is the kind of sadness expressed by essay author Lawrence different than the sadness a mother may experience?
7. If you have never personally experienced these emotions for these reasons, what techniques can you use to build and show true empathy with a father?

Prompts for Chapter 15:

Helicopter Parent

1. In hindsight, was it a good idea to try to get Alexander to go to the front of the class, or should an adaptation have been made ahead of time?
2. What would you tell a father who is subject to repeated aggression or physical injuries by a child who has a hard time managing emotions?
3. Do some reading on PTSD and fathers whose children have aggressive tendencies. What are the challenges that these father may have in communicating their reality to others? How can you help coach them to understand their love, maintain everyone's safety, and continue to include themselves and families in activities as typical as possible?
4. Do you believe that a father could be diagnosed with PTSD from being the subject of repeated aggression from a young or adult child? Should the diagnosis be something else?
5. Essay author Dietz has said "One definition of manhood is being hit by your child and showing the control to not hit back." Do you agree with his statement or not? Why?
6. How can you, in your daily work and public interactions, create a better understanding of the dynamic of young and adult children who aggress toward their fathers in society in general. What can you do to help reduce misunderstandings in public when these scenes unfold? For example: If you are near an encounter and a law officer is involved? If a 3rd party steps in and is engaging in an unhelpful way? Supporting the child and the father in the situation in an appropriate way? Knowing when to do nothing? If other individuals are nearby and frightened?

Prompts for Chapter 17:

Man Up

1. Essay author Hanlin starts off with a strong and stereotypical statement about manhood in this piece. What picture was in your mind after you read the first two words of this essay?
2. How would you explain “emotional disorder NOS” to a father?
3. What do think about essay author Hanlin’s use of the words “war zone?” Would you use a less colorful metaphor? The same one and explain it more? What kinds of father clients would you use (or not use) this metaphor with?
4. Have a discussion with your class or team about the sentence “We don’t get to fall back on the reassurance that it’s just a phase.”
5. Role play the emotion of a father feeling “imaginary” scorn from a parent or grandparent or other important role model, now deceased, who in the father’s mind is “scorning” the father for not doing “manhood” right.
6. Guilt and perspectives of “manhood” seem to be intertwined in this and other essays. Compare and contrast this kind of interplay in some fathers’ minds with what you experience in mothers’ minds.

Prompts for Chapter 18:

The iPod

1. This story is likely fictional (or is it?) What lessons can you draw from it to help a father?
2. How can you counsel a client if, when, and how to react to a person using the word “retard” aimed at a stranger? Aimed at their loved one – in front of or away from him or her? What if the person using the word were a friend or co-worker? What if they were saying it “offhand” and not about their loved one? When “must” a response happen – and when must a response be avoided? How can you respond when a person doesn't mean it in a derogatory way and is just uninformed?
3. What other “superhero” fantasies may a father have about “saving” their loved ones from a dangerous situation? Are these fantasies healthy or unhealthy and why?
4. Role play a counseling situation in which a father is feeling like he can no longer “protect” his adult child with a disability while that adult child is out and about in the community.
5. Did the older guy in shirt and tie react appropriately? If so why? If not, what else could he have done? How do people typically respond in situations like this? What is the likelihood that someone would intervene in this way?
6. Overall, do you find the story realistic? Inspirational? Frightening? Unrealistic? Why? How would a situation like this unfold in your opinion in the area in which you live?

Prompts for Chapter 19:

The Cold Side of the Bed

1. How would you coach a parent to understand and support a co-parent who is jealous of the other's ability to "go to work" everyday whilst the first deals with the daily issues of the offspring's challenges?
2. What if the "traditional" roles in question 1 are reversed? How do you coach the father to understand and support a mother as he deals with the daily issues of the offspring's challenges? How do you coach the father to react and respond (or not respond) to things others may say about his non-traditional role?
3. What coping skills, including "3am solitude time" as the father in this story uses, could you recommend to a father to process his challenges?
4. How could you coach a father, not as patient as the father in the essay, to better support his spouse, children, and himself?

Prompts for Chapter 20:

The Right Thing

1. Essay author O'Neill explores a situation in which the father experiences similar challenges to the children. She handles the situation and the relationship with the father in a very atypical way. As you discuss with your group, what are your feelings about this father's role? How would you coach this father? How would you share his experience with other fathers in order for them to learn?
2. Discuss essay author O'Neill's experience in choosing a second husband. What are your group's thoughts on the small details the author has shared about that experience? How would you have coached the second husband, had you had the chance and known only what the author shares in this essay?
3. O'Neill gives kudos to the children's father in some direct and indirect ways. What can you glean from her acknowledgements of the father's strength that you can use to coach other dads who may have some challenges or difficulties themselves? What can you glean that can help other mothers recognize the father's role even if the father has limitations or challenges?
4. What is your opinion about the dog and cat metaphor shared in this essay? How careful should you be with metaphor to avoid offending clients and others (see the "alien" reference in essayist Howe's piece).

Prompts for Chapter 21:

A Father's Unbroken Vow

1. Essay author Hauck brings up many issues in the Deaf community. What do you know about how the Deaf community generally approaches the definition of disability? Are you training yourself to understand the variety of aspects of perspective about whether being deaf is or isn't a disability? What is your perspective on this issue?
2. This is an essay about a "bilingual, bicultural marriage." Would you, and if so, how would you, consider fatherhood with a spouse and/or child with a disability "bilingual" or "bicultural?" Would this be a useful framing for you to work with fathers? What model of disability do you hold – medical, moral, social, other?
3. What parallels (beyond the obvious father has an issue and child may or may not have the same issue) are there between this piece and to essay author Salesses' piece about sensory integration issues?
4. What is the impact of adaptive equipment on family life? How can you coach a father who may not want to, to become comfortable relying on adaptive equipment?
5. What are your personal reflections about your own culture and the roles of fathers and mothers, especially with regard to disability?
6. How might you best work with another individual or family whose cultural background differs from your own?

Prompts for Chapter 22:

Scenes from a Marriage

1. Divorce is lovingly and humorously mentioned in this piece. This essay is another instance where research on actual divorce rates, reason for divorce, and discussing marriage challenges when you have a child or children that experiences a disability has raised its head. Why is it so hard to get good research on divorce and disability?
2. Role play a scenario as a married couple, using a single challenge that the child has brought up. In this roleplay assume the child is verbal and in the room with you. Let it play out and take notes. What can you bring from this role play to help your dad clients? What did you learn about yourself in this roleplay? What are things you need to improve on to ready yourself to better work with fathers?
3. This essay is another one, such as the author Howe's essay, that could bring up issues in the neurodiversity community based on language use and actions taken. In your group, look at author Cariello's essay from several angles, and discuss what you see in her language and perspectives. Then, switch perspectives with someone who may have had an opposite opinion of you and argue the other perspective.

Prompts for Chapter 23:

Dadadaptation

1. How do you communicate with a father who has been told by other professionals the “percentage chance” of a particular outcome or life expectancy? How do you discuss this with a dad (especially an analytical dad) who wants clear, concrete answers?
2. Essay author Guice shares some stuff that father Cliff did with son Kevin that was sort of reckless. How would you coach a dad to find the proper balance between safety and engaging activities for him and his child?
3. Cliff indeed seems like a super-dad. Other dads who love their children just as much may not outwardly exhibit the same ingenuity or energy. What feelings could come up for fathers who compare themselves with “social media” heroes and think they don’t measure up? Is it different for dads of disability to deal with comparisons to “super-dads” than it is for dads of typically developing children? How could you address this in your work with dads?
4. How can you help a dad understand that their child loves him and enjoys being with him, even when that child isn’t as verbally capable as Kevin?

Prompts for Chapter 24:

Dear Dad an Open Letter

1. Discuss the connection to music for families living with disability. How might the role of music shared between a father and child with any kind of disability be similar and different when compared with a father a typically developing child?
2. Role play a typically developing adult child telling a father things she has not yet shared from her childhood experience of living with a sibling with disability. Those watching the role play, take notes and generate ideas you can share with your client fathers of things that their children may think about them, but may go unsaid.
3. Perform a role play where you help a client father overcome resentment for health problems of his own that may or may not have been exacerbated by the challenges of raising a child with challenges.
4. Is it a realistic “ask” in most families to ask an adult child to write a letter like this to the father? Why or why not? When would you suggest this, and when would you avoid it? What if the adult child with or without a disability or challenge also has resentment of the father in addition to affection?

Prompts for Chapter 25:

The Measure of Grief

1. Do you, and how do or should you (if at all) approach fathers of different professional capabilities? Are there differences in their ability to handle advocacy, communication, and taking advice based on their professional experiences? Why or why not?
2. Are you surprised at the reaction of essay author Howe's response to his *Money Magazine* essay? If so why? If not, why?
3. Would you identify the early stages of a father engaging the intense special needs of a young child as grief? Why or why not? How would you respond to a father's lament of "when will it end?"
4. This essay deserves a deeper discussion of the apparent schism between some "neurodiversity" advocates (in the most general sense, identifying differences in lieu of identifying disability) and advocates coming from this and other perspectives. Do some research on these perspectives, and briefly summarize your findings. Discuss in your group.
5. Reflect on the skills that you bring to your work with fathers who might be at various stages in the process of grief/loss/mourning/acceptance/adaptation. What do you already know how to do that they can utilize and build on? What areas do you feel like you need more information and learning? How can you be sure you can support a father of a young or adult child with a disability regardless of where you have to "meet them?"

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Prompts for Chapter 26:

Labels

1. At what point do you counsel a dad to prepare for disparaging terms uttered at their workplace about their child's challenges? Do you prepare them at all? Do you wait until they ask for advice on this issue?
2. How will fathers generally be better or worse prepared for derogatory comments than mothers? Does gender role socialization play a role at all?
3. Discuss the changing perspectives of the word "retarded." Is this language still a part of your state or region's government documentation? How do you respond to it? How will you coach fathers to address it, if at all?
4. Discuss the perennial "handicapped parking spot" problem, the language around it, and what, when, and when not to react to controversies around it in real world situations.
5. As a team, brainstorm phrases that may be considered labels. Which terms are you more or less comfortable with from your list?
6. Do you catch yourself using diagnostic or counseling language ("high functioning", "non-compliant", etc.) that labels people in ways you or others are uncomfortable with? How do you deal with this language in your professional life?

Prompts for Chapter 27:

Take Me Out to the Ballgame

1. Essay author Kent explores a disorder relatively unknown to most of us. What lessons can you draw from this essay to help other fathers begin to deal with a child's diagnosis of a challenge they may not have ever heard of?
2. Role play a father teaching a sibling, who is clearly frustrated at the limitations his or her sibling's issue presents, how to be more patient.
3. How can you coach a dad to be okay with enjoying something his child can never enjoy, especially if it is something traditionally valuable to his "manhood" in his experience?
4. Role play a father opening a discussion with a relative or friend who is minimizing or disparaging something that you must do to protect the life of your child. Will you take an educational approach? A defensive approach? Will you be willing to end the friendship or contact with that person if they don't respond respectfully?
5. Role play as a counselor discussing with a client father when he might engage with the public, ignore the public, and when to tell "little white lies" to just be able to move on with their day when confronted with a disability or challenge discussion.

Prompts for Chapter 28:

What Does His Mother Think?

1. In your personal cultural, religious, or family background has a father been viewed as a “less than” caregiver? Why or why not?
2. Find a partner and learn their cultural views on fatherhood. Then, share yours. Have your partner represent a client with different cultural views than their own. Then you do the same.
3. Why do you think that in medical caregiver situations, people who are traditionally seen as part of the “patriarchy” could have their roles and impact discounted? What can you do to foster an environment where the expectation is that gender becomes less important than experience and skill for caregivers? An environment where everyone’s expectations of the parents, children, and clients are informed based on facts and details and observations, and less on traditional gender expectations?
4. Reflect on ways that you have already engaged in deconstructing your own implicit biases. What have you uncovered and what was the experience like for you? How will you continue to work on your implicit biases, and how will you incorporate this in your professional practice? How could this support your work with all fathers?

Prompts for Chapter 29:

Playing with Blueberries and Cream

1. How do you coach a dad who has similar challenges to their young or adult child and feels guilty about “passing them on” to the child?
2. How does the current knowledge about the genetic predisposition of a particular behavior or condition impact how you coach a father who is experiencing pressure and/or guilt from themselves and others about their child’s disability?
3. Essay author Salesses mentions crying in this piece. Are his tears central to the story? Why do you think he was okay with sharing his tears in this essay? What do you think could have been the cause of the tears?

Prompts for Chapter 30:

Boxes in the Night

1. Essay author Earl makes a large effort to determine what is bothering son Hyrum. Clearly solving the challenge is something that author Earl intends to do. How would you coach other dads, perhaps less creative or capable dads, to deal with their own emotions of being able to or not being able to address a meltdown?
2. How would you coach fathers to not feel as if they are a failure when they can't solve an issue? Do fathers process not solving an issue different than mothers?
3. What are the top three lessons you can draw from this essay that you could clearly write down in “memes” to share specifically with fathers that you think would help them? Create the memes and share for opinions.
4. What clients have you worked with who have shared “superhero” fantasies about “saving the child?” And how did you help them deal with the reality versus their hopeful fantasy? Whether or not you've dealt with this yet, do a small role play of a dad who thought he could fix something that he couldn't, and the ramifications he felt.

Prompts for Chapter 31:

Running Away

1. Can you have empathy for a father who “runs away?” How can you coach a father who is considering it? How can you remain supportive of a father who is considering it? If you can’t find empathy, what will you do professionally to have someone else coach or counsel the father?
2. Men often have complex relationships with their own fathers. How can you coach someone whose relationship with their own father, one who they wanted to “replicate and become better than” is fundamentally shifted when they have their own child who happens to have a complex challenge? Or is this a non-question as all father-child relationships are challenging and different regardless of disability?
3. Brainstorm what you think author Barr meant by “The dynamic duo of a mother and a father is important for a reason. A child needs the balance of a caring father and caring mother. When this influential family model is broken, the child is going to suffer.” What world view does the author hold that might inform this perspective? What are your own world views in terms of parenting roles, number of parents, gender, etc. How do you address a situation in which your client doesn’t agree with your view?
4. In your opinion, are role-played conversations between a father and one of his now-dead heroes or role models a useful exercise? If so, have one now and write it down. If not, what other exercises would you suggest to a father that could accomplish a similar goal, and why?

Prompts for Chapter 32:

Predestined: The Journey of a Stay-at-Home Dad

1. Talk about your experiences with “Diagnosis day.” If you’ve experienced them, how do dads and moms react differently? If you haven’t experienced them, how will you prepare yourself to help dads through this event and the times after it?
2. Research and talk about the divorce rate for parents of children with disabilities. Discuss this controversial topic as a group. Does the divorce rate even matter when you bring the reality down to specific families?
3. Discuss the challenges of a father being a stay-at-home dad with young or adult children with complex medical issues. Issues include workplace understanding or lack thereof regarding traditional male and female roles. The extra cultural and community pressure of a dad out-and-about during the day. The self-pressure of stereotypical money roles swapping in a family dynamic made more complex by disability. Discuss other issues you’d like to bring up in this context.
4. How will you coach a father whose philosophical or religious beliefs align with pre-destiny compared with one whose beliefs say that everything is not pre-destined? Would there be any difference in your approach at all?

Prompts for Chapter 33:

Sara's Dad

1. Essay author Gray's piece has parallels to the situation in "A Son's Life Force." Discuss the similarities and differences between these essays. What lessons can you draw from this "compare and contrast" that you can use to help fathers?
2. Role play discussing the "epiphany" Sara's dad had. In the role play ask him how he succeeded where others may have failed, and how he would coach other fathers to succeed as he did.
3. How would you coach a father's dating partner or potential life partner – and the father himself – to understand what that new blended family will need? Role play a difficult and forthright "pre-marital" coaching session with the two parents and their commitments in a blended family that has a young or adult child with a disability.
4. How would you coach a "breadwinning dad" to work through the plusses and minuses of taking a less-preferred job that may work better for the family?
5. How would you coach a single Dad to better advocate for a young child's school needs?

Prompts for Chapter 34:

A Son's Life Force

1. Why is it so much rarer to see a fathers' group than a mothers' group? How can you help change this? Should you help change this?
2. It is unusual for the mother to leave. Or is it? Reflect on why the perception (reality?) is that mothers leave less often. What is the difference in your reaction when you hear a mother has left VS when a father has left? What judgements arise for you? Where do they come from? What feelings do you have toward a dad whose co-parent has left VS the feelings you have toward a dad who has left? If a mother leaves and the father is alone with a young child with challenges, how can you help him in your role?
3. How would you coach a father with a young child with complex challenges to enter the dating world? When? How? When to mention the child? How to discuss the child? How can and should the father "casually" date? How and when can the father know that the dating partner and potential life-mate is or isn't ready for a commitment to a blended family that includes an individual with a disability?
4. Essay author Perlman's son Max's death is a huge and challenging issue. And yet it is not really the main theme of the essay, until the end. And then... it is. How do you feel about this essay's celebration of Max's life and the author's fatherhood? How could you use author Perlman's approach to help other fathers?

Prompts for Chapter 35:

Mickey Won't Die, But We Will

1. Essay author Hackett asks, “How can we help Tim prepare for the inevitable changes that will come for those he loves the most?” How can you help fathers help their adult offspring with this challenge? Is reducing the individual’s exposure to death a good choice? Is so, when and why? If not, when and why? Do these approaches have anything to do with a father’s perceptions of mortality? Should they?
2. How would you coach a father whose child with challenges is aging to deal with them aging together? Is this situation the same or different than a “typical” father with a “typically developing” adult child? What are the similarities and/or differences?
3. When and how would you coach a father to create visual and audio memories for their offspring? Role play a father sharing a photo album with an adult offspring who has some intellectual challenges. How will the father know when and what to share and when to stop sharing? How could the offspring end up helping the father emotionally during this exchange?
4. When would (and wouldn’t) you recommend a father visit a gravesite with his offspring? What would you recommend a father set up so that his offspring is (or isn’t) enabled to visit his own gravesite after the father’s passing?

Prompts for Chapter 36:

Smartphone Tears

1. How would you coach a dad about alcohol consumption in the context of this essay? In the context of other situations in the care of young and adult children with challenges? Do problems with alcohol have different thresholds with the fathers you serve, or is there no difference in advice you would give to these versus other fathers?
2. Discuss fathers and crying in general. How would you coach a dad to feel about their intense sadness?
3. How will you handle a father who breaks down in tears in your office? When they are with their significant other? Alone with you? In front of a young or adult child with a disability?
4. How, and when, will you bring in other professionals to help a father who is intensely sad? When is the sadness and expression thereof at a level that may not require additional professional help? How can you mention the need for additional help with fathers of various personalities and cultures?
5. Role play coaching fathers of various personalities and backgrounds into obtaining some, or further, mental health services for their issues and feelings. Or, if you are that person delivering those services, role play a session where you address a specific issue that causes him to cry.

Prompts for Chapter 37:

My Brother Ernie

1. It's only been around 40 years since there were special education laws. Research what families did before these laws and write a short piece about stories you found where families made different decisions.
2. The discussions and challenges around institutional settings are vast and opinions are deep and passionate. Pick a state, province, or country and research what the current policies and best practice recommendations are. List them in a tabular form and critique the upsides and downsides of a few of the major policies in force in the region you've chosen.
3. In the closing line of essay author Dionne's piece, he ponders his brother's realization of his situation. What can you do in your professional role to encourage fathers to approach their young or adult child's situation realistically, but optimistically?
4. How are things different today (or are they at all?) between now and when Ernie was a young man? What did professionals historically recommend if a newborn clearly had significant challenges?
5. How will you coach young and adult and aging brothers of individuals with challenges to approach thinking about what their "father like" role may or may not be as they and their siblings age?
6. What are your thoughts about Ernie's parent's decision? Was it "of the times?" Could it have been, and if so, how could it have been different, then or today?

Prompts for Chapter 39:

Roles They are A-Changin’

1. There are number of questions and statements in this essay. Take one, find online blogs or support groups that help address this issue, and write a two-page opinion piece agreeing with or challenging some points of view you find about the issue you selected.
2. Essay author Dietz said, “Roles can’t change in a vacuum.” Should roles have to change? What is your responsibility as a professional to coach dads to evolve their roles, if any?
3. Page 212 lists several realizations. What are two or three realizations you have heard from some of your father clients? What are two or three realizations you have come to yourself? Which of your own attitudes have changed?
4. In your opinion, what is “the next phase of addressing disability in our society?” And how are you helping foster the emergence if that next phase?
5. Essay author Dietz says, “When we mobilize our strength publicly as men and as dads of disability, it becomes easier to replace the sanitized, happy-assed, inspiration-porn that often masquerades as advocacy for families like ours after editing by an uninspired or uneducated media producer.” What is your role, if any, in changing this? If you have a role in changing this, what are you doing to change it? If you don’t have a role in changing this, why is this issue not your responsibility in your current professional role?

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Prompts for Chapter 40:

Lila the Philosopher

1. Do you think the level of sensitivity shown by Lila was an innate feature of her personality, impacted by her upbringing, or both? In what ways?
2. How would you coach a father to discuss disability with a young child? Would you differentiate between physical and intellectual challenges? What are some things the father can do to help the child understand?
3. How would you coach a father to address an honest, forthright question or comment a young child asks of someone who appears different? To address an innocent, but rude question?
4. Under what conditions should a father respond or not respond to questions about their own young or adult child with a disability when queried by a young stranger? By an adult stranger?
5. What are some good ways to build an environment to encourage a young child to accept differences in people? What are some things you should avoid?