**BOOK REVIEW**

**FROM AUTISTIC TO AWESOME: A JOURNEY OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH LIFE WITH MY SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD**

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At a time when there has been such an immense rise in the population of children with disabilities and the word “autism” causes a bad connotation, Paul M. Powell brings a positive yet realistic parents point of view. So many children are being diagnosed with Autism and even though we are more familiarized with the diagnosis there is still much to learn. The book, From Autism to Awesome: A Journey of Spiritual Growth through Life with My Special Needs Child brings to life what many parents with children with autism endure on a daily basis and most do not dare to say. Paul M. Powell retells his story as a parent of a child with autism from the moment he suspected his child had a disability to being able to accept it. With today’s stigma many parents experience great difficulty because their child is different; Paul M. Powell’s book serves as a go to guide for how to deal or not to deal with certain situations that they may undergo and with many resource ideas. The book is made up of twelve chapters and is set up chronologically, in the order in which events occurred. Throughout the book Paul M. Powell focus heavily on the importance of having a belief and support system, the stress on his marriage, and the impact on his social everyday activities.

Just like in many parts of our lives, we always look for some type of support to help us deal with unbearable days or to help us believe that there will be better days. Throughout the book, Powell includes his religion has a main factor in the way he decides or perceives things going on in his life. As a matter of fact, each chapter begins with a bible verse that leads to the rests of the segment. In a study conducted by Clifford and Minnes (2012), one hundred and forty-nine parents of children with disabilities were given questionnaires to see if they were part of any parent support system and asked them questions of how they manage certain situations. The results showed that parents that are involved in some sort of group support, whether it be for religious beliefs or not, were able to use adaptive coping skills. In addition to having a religious support system, Powell discusses the idea of having man resources of information and the important of having a group of people as a support system. Powell’s book is full of a wealth of knowledge for parents that have recently had a child diagnosed with autism and may serve as a step by step guide of some measures that need to be taken in order to find the best help for the child.

In addition to having external support systems, one of the main and most strained support systems a parent can have is their spouse. Hock, Ramisch, and Timm (2011), discuss the notion that parents with children with autism experience a time known as a “crucible” in order to illustrate the stress inputted into their marriage because of autism. During this time their marriage is put under a great amount of strain and is tested with emotionally and physically. In Powell’s book he describes going through different emotions with his wife and at times not quite understanding his spouse. Parents of children with special needs most definitely can relate and reading Powell’s book will help ease the stress of their relationship by knowing that they are not the only ones feeling and sustaining the same emotions. Powell’s book also demonstrates ways to help facilitate marriage issues, such as going to a therapist and discussing your issues with another professional that can give you an outside point of view and advice.

One of the main problems many parents with disabilities must overcome is the ability to continue daily social activities with their child. Something as simple as going to do some groceries or going to the park can become extremely strenuous to a parent with a child with disability. Powell (2012) discusses in his book of the experience of taking his son with autism to bible classes on Sunday and the reaction of the teachers caused him to leave his church and continue the bible study classes at home. Ebeling, Kuusikko-Gauffin, Jussila, Mattila, Moilanen, Pauls, and Pollack-Wurman (2012) conducted a study where parents with and without students with autism were given an assessment that measures social phobias and their level of anxiety. The results demonstrated that parents of children with autism have a high level of anxiety and a higher level of social phobias. It is important for the need of support in these areas to parents of children with autism to be further explored. Powell’s book does a great job at giving examples and details of just how much tension parents of children with autism must endure on a daily basis.

Powell’s book, From Autistic to Awesome, is a demonstration of not only the negative experiences parents with children with disabilities endure but it also highlights the positive experiences. So many research and studies focus on the negative aspects of autism and many parents get discouraged. Powell’s powerful words of encouragement and his ability to find “peace” with his child’s disability is great motivation for many parents that are going through what he has gone through.

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**References**

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