

# Dr. Sarah Bridges, PhD

Speaker, Author, Consultant, Working Mother

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## Lessons I Learned from my Disabled Son

Dr. Sarah Bridges uses lessons from her disabled son, Porter, to assist not only her healthcare and educational clients, but also her high-level corporate coaching clients. Available as Keynote or Workshop.

An Excerpt from “A Bad Reaction” – a memoir by Dr. Sarah Bridges (Skyhorse Publishing 2016):

*“The very worst thing I could imagine happened to one of my children. My son became mentally disabled as a baby when a medication cause a brain injury. He was transformed from a typical infant to a terribly damaged one – all in the course of one day. It was horrible at first. Things were gone...The hope seeped out of my brain. I was sure it would never come back. At first, I tried to fix him. It took years to learn...”*

### **Lesson #1: Perhaps the brain that needed changing was mine**

As a third-generation PhD, I had never questioned the belief that being smart meant having a great life. Only when I stopped counting the things he didn’t have did I learn to see the things he does have. This is true in many situations with many people.

### **Lesson #2: Porter lives in the moment**

We wander through our lives with a terminal case of distraction. Porter lives in the present moment. He is relaxed and here. Being the tiniest bit neurotic myself, it has often struck me as far-fetched that we are in fact related. He doesn’t worry about how he looks. He’s never shown anyone his muscles. He doesn’t worry whether people think he has it together.

### **Lesson #3: Maintain continual amazement as life unfolds**

Until Porter, I subscribed to the “mastery orientation” approach where you pursued things to achieve other things. I compared my children to our neighbors’ kids to make sure we weren’t behind. This is why I need him. Not so that he might be more like me, but so that we “smart people” may see the world a bit more like him.

### **Lesson #4: Take time to listen**

### **Lesson #5: Porter has no bias**

He grins like he’s just heard the best joke of his life. He gravitates to everyone – he doesn’t see race; he doesn’t see gender or religion, and not in the typical “love=tolerance” way. I am talking about hand-flapping, toothy-grinned beaming. He doesn’t see the separation between us.

### **Lesson #6: Porter’s default setting is connectedness**

Compassion is our truest response to each other. When you walk around with the door to your heart propped open, people come in. They can’t help it.

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