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Lessons My Disabled Son Taught Me

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.

[Click here for video example of “Lessons I Learned” Speech](#)

Other speech topics available: www.sarahbridges.com/speaking.html

Videos of other highly-requested topics: www.vimeo.com/freerangelives

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