KIRKUS

REVIEWS

Singer, Jonathan
THE SPECIAL
NEEDS PARENT
HANDBOOK
*Critical Strategies and
Practical Advice to
Help You Survive and
Thrive*
CreateSpace (104 pp.)
$14.99 Paperback
March 9, 2012
ISBN: 978-1470047214

A brief, compassionate guide to raising a disabled child.

Singer's daughter Rebecca, now 14, was born with Phelan-McDermid Syndrome, a genetic disorder causing autistic inclinations and requiring constant care. While he candidly admits that the situation for him and his wife has proven "exhausting, overwhelming and impossible at times," the author presents coping mechanisms and proven methods of management that can alleviate stress and promote familial wellness. The impetus for the project came from years randomly answering special-needs care questions on an online discussion group and on his website, which he saved into book form to "share our life lessons." In 2008, a minor dispute with a local school district compelled the author to release the book and create the unique "Advocacy for All" program, an empowering initiative that helps families find a voice on behalf of their children. Singer writes in an affable, conversational tone, making prickly situations—e.g., insurance claims, negative public perception of disabilities and restroom-assistance issues—much easier to digest. The author also includes practical tips for organizing a child's vital paperwork, sensitivity exercises and sample flyers and letters appealing for community support. Singer is proactive and inclusive and discusses issues concerning necessary quality time and procuring suitable babysitters and medical care, while extolling the importance of familial harmony and open communication, physical, psychological and emotional self-care and estate planning and medical care for the child. The author also urges parents of the disabled to resist the urge to make comparisons with "typically developing kids." All proceeds will benefit Advocacy for All (driveforrebecca.org).

A deceptively thin, constructive caregiving resource.