

Apparently: This Is What Parenting Feels Like

Sue Dvorak

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Apparently is a supportive memoir that shares vulnerable stories to reflect the challenging, rewarding nature of being a parent.

Sue Dvorak's heartfelt memoir *Apparently* is about navigating unpredictable parenting challenges with a sense of adventure.

Using her experiences of motherhood to reflect on her life, Dvorak sets her child-rearing years with her six children against a backdrop of being parented to bring caregiving full circle. She discusses her childhood, becoming a parent, and caring for her parents in turn, using states of constant flux to reflect on changes with her parents and children. The book honors the idea that each child is different, each situation is unique, and that change is inevitable. Its progression through life stages is logical, and the chapters are divided into subcategories that highlight milestones like learning, coping with challenges, loss, and important family events.

Rich in raw emotions, the book captures the highs and lows of parenting well. Dvorak expresses fear and panic when recounting a choking child but also conveys the deep affection she felt while holding her baby for the first time. Pops of humor also arise in unexpected places, as with stories about breastfeeding and pooping babies—for instance, Dvorak remembers a time when her baby soiled itself and her too. Taken together, Dvorak's tales reflect the unpredictable nature of parenthood well.

Though some of its paragraphs run long and it overuses adverbs to distracting effect, the book stays approachable and balanced thanks to its multimedia techniques. It makes use of bullet-point lists, as of “things parents hear about, with interest, from their adult child,” and text boxes to emphasize insights or snippets of children speaking:

“Wassat culled? Wassat culled?”

“Err lar looooo ... ?”

“Wa do dat, Mum? Wa do dat?”

—every 2-year-old, asking questions.

All. Day.

Poems are also included to express certain emotions, with lines like “A scrawny cherub not imagined” arousing emotions through keen images and expressions of feeling. Indeed, the prose is conversational, sympathetic, and inquisitive throughout. The idea that caregiving is hard is emphasized, appearing alongside affirmations that it's supposed to be hard and reassurances that all will turn out okay in the end. Virtues including patience, persistence, and inner strength are held up throughout, framed by the dominant theme of love. Dvorak notes that when her children made good choices, she loved them, and that when they made poor choices, she maintained that love: “We have to love our way through this.” Unforeseen and serendipitous parenting moments are shown to flow together into a coherent feeling of parenthood.

An encouraging memoir–cum–parenting guide, *Apparently* acknowledges and celebrates the unpredictability of being a parent.

SHARI MARSHALL (March 5, 2025)

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