

Schechter, I. J. (2019). Do You Ever Cry, Dad? Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Reviewed by: Mariah Gorecki, MacEwan University

I.J. Schechter's book, "Do You Ever Cry, Dad?" is a book written for dads by a dad. He tells the story of his divorce and how it impacted him and his children, as well as provides advice for other dads in similar situations. Schechter also includes inserts from friends and colleagues who have valuable advice, as well as professionals. He also gives a whole chapter of his book to his daughter, to allow her to tell the story through her eyes. He also gives his own answers to commonly asked questions from other divorced dads. Schechter acknowledges that this is simply his experience and his perspective, and he recognizes that every family will experience a split in their own way. He includes quotes that allow a reader to see how even celebrities, academics and accomplished people can experience this kind of disruption in their life. Schechter quotes Steven Spielberg, "E.T began with me trying to write a story about my parents' divorce" (p. 43). By including this, and other quotes like it, Schechter makes a point that this is something that can touch anyone, and the purpose of his book is to support any other father who is going through the split of his family. Throughout his book, Schechter focuses on a few things, one of them being self-awareness. He talks about moments in his own journey where he knew he was not acting like himself and needed to change something. He also focuses on having a positive relationship with your ex, for the sake of your children. He gives various examples showing how he has attempted to do this. Another thing that Schechter focuses on is supporting one another. As mentioned, he

includes a lot of different perspectives from people he knows, as well as answers their questions. This creates a supportive, safe feeling when reading the book.

When discussing ways to help kids feel safe in the midst of a family split, Schechter divides it into daily, regular and spontaneous things that fathers can do (p. 31). Something you can do daily is help your kids with their homework or pack their lunch, a regular activity would be Saturday piano lessons, and a spontaneous activity would be going on family hikes sometimes (p. 21). Schechter points out that doing these activities can help your kids feel reassured in a time of change. Schechter says that communicating clearly, asking your children how they are feeling, and teaching them how to acknowledge their feelings can help them better deal with a family split. However, while it is important to allow children space to deal with their own emotions, it is also important to make it clear to them that their parents are still the strong adults capable of taking care of them.

As mentioned, Schechter gave a chapter of his book to his daughter, so that she could have a space (if she wanted to) to express her perspective. It was very interesting to read this portion of the book. While his daughter is young, she is very articulate, and was able to clearly express how the divorce felt for her. She mentioned that the hardest part for her was finding out that her parents were splitting up, and she was scared that she wouldn't see her dad anymore (p. 44). She appreciates that they do not argue anymore (p. 44). She even provides advice to other parents who may be going through a split and says not to fight in front of the kids. (p. 44) She advises parents to be kind to each other as well (p. 44). Schechter talks about parts of the split that impacted his children, so it was interesting to hear it from their view. He also provides a section detailing his split through his parents' eyes. His parents were a big support for him during the split, and he felt

it was important to include their perspectives in the book. His parents spoke about the hardest parts of the divorce for them, and also what was positive about it (p. 54).

Another choice that Schechter made was to include questions asked by friends. For example, one of his friends Chad asks questions such as what do kids need most from their dad during a split, what's been the greatest challenge, and what are some practical household issues? (p. 63). Schechter goes on to say that love is the most important thing you can give your children during this time, and it is very important to respect your ex, as she is the children's mother (p. 63). This means not bringing many dates around the kids and not putting down their mother (p. 63). Schechter says the greatest challenge for him has been having to be far away from his daughter due to work (p. 63). He identifies having good communication as being a good tool in avoiding practical household issues.

The intention of the author was to provide a safe, non-judgemental space for other dads going through a family split and offer advice that may be helpful to them. He set out to share his own story as well as how the people around him experienced the divorce. By including his answers to questions asked by others, he makes the book more interactive and relatable for potential readers. Schechter wanted to give fathers going through a family split an outlet to feel supported in this time. Schechter talks about events that gave him a glimpse into how much his divorce really was impacting him as a person and as a father. His son asked him one day, "Do you ever cry, dad?" (p. 13). This was a wake-up call for Schechter because he realized that even though all he had done for months was cry, his kids had never seen that side of him (p. 13). He realized that instead of hiding his emotions from his children, he needed to be open about how things were impacting him.

Schechter saw that many other fathers were dealing with this as well. Many other dads were suffering through splits and putting on a brave face for their kids. In writing this book, he hoped to support and inspire other dads who may have been feeling a similar pain as him.

As far as limitations for this book, I see none. I think this is a wonderful resource for dads going through a family split. It feels very supportive and easy to read. Schechter isn't judgemental and he does not force his views upon the reader. He is strategic in giving advice without attacking anyone. This book would appeal to the academic field of social work, as it is a supportive, non-judgemental resource for struggling dads. This book also includes some input from psychologists, so for this reason it could also appeal to the academic audience of psychology. I really enjoyed reading this book, coming from a social work perspective. I found it to be impactful because it was advice and support for dads, coming from someone who has been there. Knowing that this resource is available could be so helpful for a reader who is just looking for some support and guidance in a difficult time. I am not a dad going through a family split and I found it to be a wonderful read as well. This book was easy to read and engaging because it was broken up by various perspectives. For example, some chapters were answers to questions, while some were Schechter's thoughts. Breaking the book up like this made it engaging and easy to follow. I would recommend this book to any dad going through a divorce, or just anyone who is interested in gaining more perspective into what it is like for dads during family breakups.