

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

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“Do You Ever Cry, Dad?”, is a heartfelt depiction of divorce, written from the personal perspective of divorced father of two; I.J. Schechter. In this book, Schechter unravels his firsthand experience with divorce, while including the opinions of fellow divorced fathers, psychologists, and family counsellors. Written essentially as a guide for divorced dads, each chapter regards a different aspect or struggle a divorced man will face during his breakup and offers guidance with each topic. Schechter demonstrates a great deal of transparency in his writing. He provides endless anecdotes from his own experiences, both good and bad, and is unafraid of admitting his own parenting mistakes. This vulnerability allows the reader to connect with his advice and resonate with the book as a whole. Tackling divorce head on, Schechter discusses all aspects of the family breakup openly and fearlessly. “The purpose of this book is to help you, and other dads, make the best guesses you can, based on my experience, the experience of others, and the views of professionals” (p. 9).

Throughout the book, Schechter goes into great depth about how a father’s world changes during divorce. He explains how every dynamic of their life is shifted and rearranged, leaving fathers to essentially reconstruct the way they function as a person. However, Schechter suggests that while this is tremendously difficult for parents, it’s even more disorienting for the children.

He explains how children “crave routine and stability, and resist change” (p. 29) and identifies one of the greatest struggles of handling a divorce is the ability to communicate with children about what the divorce means and entails. Kids see divorce as a loss of everything they have come to know: the love their parents have for each other, their home and living arrangements, and even day to day routines seem to completely change. Schechter offers a few ways to combat this perplexity. Including demonstrating to children in every way possible the similarities of their life before and after the divorce. This can occur in simple ways such as seeing movies as a family, driving them to practice, and maintaining the same bedtime. Preserving these routines let children know that even though their parents are splitting up, the structure of their life is staying the same (p. 32).

I.J. also explains the importance of honesty with children during this process. He explains how trying to avoid or derail their questions do more harm than good. Schechter includes a quotation from family counsellor, Karalash: “The time taken to adjust to the new family dynamics and routines depends deeply on how actively and openly the parents communicate with their children. If the children sense secrets and tension, they’ll behave accordingly” (p. 34). I.J. discusses how it is just as important to give honest, and in some cases, blunt, answers to children’s questions. He uses a personal example of when his daughter asked him if he was going to get back together with his ex-wife. Schechter explains how his instinct was to say that it was a possibility, just to avoid disappointing her. This process was more damaging than anticipated because it prevented his daughter from moving on, when she did not fully understand the situation (p. 36).

Schechter describes that a key aspect to overcoming a divorce, often underestimated, is

maintaining physical fitness. He explains how fathers will feel a severe lack of control during family breakups while they battle with emotional and practical conflicts. Taking charge of their own physical fitness, is a great way for fathers to combat this, as fitness is something they can control. Often, fathers will feel as though they are too exhausted to consistently go the gym, and the effects not going are much more severe than expected. Particularly, exercise is key to ensure that fathers have enough energy to battles the inevitable issues that arise during a divorce. Being in good physical health will allow them to make better, more rational decisions, and be less likely to lash out. Schechter includes a quotation by motivational speaker Jim Rohn; “Take care of your body, it’s the only place you have to live” (p. 120). I.J. explains how amid the mental strain, it is vital for parents to maintain their physical fitness both for their mental and physical health. Finally, Schechter describes the importance of maintaining physical fitness for the benefit of the children. When speaking with adults whose parents had broken up when they were children, they described how they felt they could finally move on once they felt their parents moving on (p. 123). Children are incredibly observant and greatly impacted by their parents' condition. If a father is not maintaining his hygiene and physical fitness, his children will pick up on that and understand that he is not in a good place. Which will in turn, affect their recovery as well.

Throughout the book, Schechter provides input on building a new life and sense of identity following a divorce. Chapter nine is titled “Harnessing your Libido” and discusses how fathers can manage their dating and sex life after a breakup. He assures that dating has not changed significantly in the past few decades and explains how men can approach it in the same way as they had originally. I.J. even provides a survey he had sent out to one hundred women on their

dating preferences for men, including all their feedback. Despite a lack of change in the dating world, Schechter explains how every divorced man's approach to it will be different depending on the type of relationship he had with his ex-wife. He clarifies that whether a man is looking for purely sex, a serious relationship, or nothing at all, is completely fine. However, he cautions fathers on the exposure of these relationships in regard to their children. Children are very curious and tend to find items which parents may not want them to see. This includes pictures, physical items (such as lingerie), and even files on a computer. Schechter explains that while venturing into a new relationship, it is important to keep these possessions away from the kids, as it may be traumatizing for them to discover. "Go crazy in private. Pursue new things. Enjoy your freedom. Share stories with your buddies. But keep your kids away from the erotic side of your life. In front of them, be the same dad you've always been." (p. 152).

I.J. Schechter wrote "Do You Every Cry, Dad?" as a guide for fathers who are struggling with a family breakup. While including his own experiences and opinions, Schechter also includes the perspectives of many others throughout the chapters, including that of psychologists, family counsellors, and other divorced fathers. The addition of multiple opinions in this book contribute to its well-roundedness and make the information more reputable. However, if Schechter had opened his book to the opinions of divorced mothers as well, that would have been extremely beneficial information for fathers to have while going through this process. In general, this book could have benefitted by providing more input and guidance for mothers, considering both parents are going through the same struggles and would each benefit from advice. Closing the book off to fathers was unnecessary and deprived readers of a wholistic understanding of divorce with the lack

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of a mother's perspective. Nevertheless, Schechter creates an honest, heartfelt novel which has undoubtedly helped many divorced fathers both understand and make it through their own family breakups. Sociology, Human Services, and Social Work students would benefit from reading this book, due to its heavy subject matter relating to family. I personally did not enjoy this book, as I found the it to be very depressing. That being said, if I was a father going through a divorce, I likely would have found it much more interesting and relevant. I do believe this book would be of great help for fathers struggling with a family breakup and would recommend it to one without hesitation.