

Schechter, I.J. (2019). Do You Ever Cry, Dad? A Father's Guide to Surviving Family Breakup. Toronto, Ontario: Dundurn Press.

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I.J. Schechter's book, "Do You Ever Cry, Dad?", breaks down the process of divorce into separate intricate topics from a male's perspective. This book offers refreshingly honest communication of the difficulties families face in the wake of a split between parents and speaks on topics pertaining to divorce that are not often explored from this perspective. Many topics discussed exist on a spectrum, with detailed explanations attempting to disclose the best possible approach to handle issues under the realm of divorce and separation.

The book follows a path of pain and suffering to acceptance and self-realization. It primarily follows the author himself, and his experience transitioning from a typical family lifestyle to the lifestyle of a single father. Schechter addresses crucial topics under the scope of family breakup, from communication with your children and ex-partner, to recovering and looking towards future possibility and happiness.

Schechter begins by recounting how drastically his life changed after going through his divorce. In the early months following the family breakup, "Certain moments would make me want to cry, scream, or both" (p. 13). Schechter quickly found that the pain of not being able to see his children as frequently consumed him on an emotional level, which led to having two significantly different run-ins with the police. The first time the author was pulled over for speeding, he was given a warning based on the sympathy of the policeman, and Schechter stated, "I

was there, but barely looked like I was” (p. 11). This encounter ties to another instance where Schechter was pulled over months after the first time, but this time by an officer much less lenient, and that upon inspection, viewed Schechter as a man who was alert and should have been able to control his driving. Upon receiving a ticket for his speeding, the author was able to understand that time does heal wounds, no matter how impactful they may be. “It’s bad, it’s bad, it’s bad, and then one day, it’s good” (p. 12). This simple quote initiates a timeline in which the book follows on many topics pertaining to divorce.

Following this introduction, Schechter begins to divulge his inexplicable level of pain following his divorce. The male perspective of emotionality towards a sensitive topic is something that is often discouraged from being openly spoken about. “This was a level of pain that was astonishing in its force and persistence” (p. 23). Although pain and suffering are topics that reoccur throughout the chapters, Schechter follows much of the negative with positives. One piece of advice given was to see the point in his life as a spectrum, with one side being the worst possible moment of the breakup process, and the other being “A state of better” (p. 24). The option to pursue the negatives with equal positives demonstrates a level of cleverness to connect with the readers to give them a situation to relate to, as well as positive tips on how to approach this issue in the future.

Schechter next describes the process of reaching a mutual understanding and respect with his children in terms of emotions following the family breakup. Managing guilt towards oneself is something he touched on quite extensively. The responsibility a parent would endure after ripping a child from their “normal” would be like “Dropping a bomb into a quiet pond” (p. 28). Schechter explains the importance of reasoning and speaking with his children about their feelings toward

the situation. He gave his children the opportunity to openly speak their feelings within the creation of the book, in which his daughter wrote, “As far as I know, my parents are good friends, they rarely fight” (p. 45). This simple sentence demonstrates how essential civil communication is within the family, no matter what feelings are bubbling underneath. To add, the ability to reason politely with his ex in the presence of their children was something that eased tensions within their family. The main goal, from the wise words of one of Schechter’s friends, is to “Keep in mind what’s best for the kids in the long run” (pg. 69).

Although the book focuses on the relationship aspect of family breakups, Schechter touches on the rights of the individuals on opposing sides of a divorce. Communication and acceptance come into play when speaking about lawyers, mediators, and the process of dividing assets. “Money is a hot-button issue” (p. 91), as Schechter proposes. The expense of hiring lawyers causes many ex-couples to attempt to resolve dividing assets on their own, although in Schechter’s case, this did not work. Civil communication between ex’s may be easy to write on paper, but in the author’s experience, was the opposite. Instead of speaking extensively on the negatives, Schechter quickly delves into positive solutions, for example; “Give every decision proper time and consideration (p. 93) and having the outlook of “A discussion to reach an agreement” (p. 95). Keeping his rights as a father while looking out for the gain of each family member was the way Schechter decided to look upon this topic.

Looking forward, Schechter focuses on his own health, physically, emotionally, and mentally. This involves his own physical wellbeing, emotional support through family and friends, and adapting his outlook on life as well as future relationships. Through the quote “Daddy, I

thought of the best push-up challenge! (p. 128), Schechter views physical well-being as a fun activity he can have with his children. He also conveys how essential close relationships are with such a drastic family change. When Schechter's parents exclaim "We got our son back!" (p. 55), the effect of a poor relationship on an individual can be seen. The ability to reignite friendships and relationships that were otherwise lost during a marriage is a positive that shines through a topic as negative as divorce. Another topic discussed is the concept of being a newly single man. Many men may have the craving to go out and meet a handful of new women, but as Schechter explains, "Your kids aren't exactly going to be cheering from the stands as you meet new people" (p. 141). Using the right approach when you speak of a new friend or partner is something Schechter touches on near the end of the book. "Look at it from the kid's perspective" (p. 187).

Throughout the book, Schechter proposes numerous obstacles that he and his family had to surmount. The author himself graciously used his own personal experiences to provide assistance to others that have to undergo similar situations. The decision for Schechter to expose his hardships in relation to divorce and family separation is a perspective that is not usually covered by authors. Schechter focuses his book on a particular audience; recently divorced men, but adds in stories and light-hearted experiences to create a book that anyone could relate to. Schechter also includes significant positive points to counter any negative experiences he may have undergone and provides helpful tips and guidance for father's on how to focus on their own future, as well as their altered family life.

Schechter focused on reaching several levels of guidance in this book. Separate to his own experiences, he also gains the insights of several professionals in the field of family psychology,

as well as the experiences of friends and coworkers that have also went through similar experiences to himself. These diverse experiences and professional insights on divorce create a read that encapsulates more than solely the storytelling of one man. Each topic Schechter covered was given an outlook from a friend, as well as a professional outlook, which in turn gave depth and dimension to this recounting of hardships and perseverance.

This book accomplishes three goals. First, Schechter provides detailed examples of his own personal stories and difficulties through his divorce that others could relate to. Second, professional and emotional advice is given to the reader to assist with settling unresolved feelings of anger or despair. Third, Schechter provides a perspective to the issue of divorce that is often discouraged from being spoken about. Schechter does an impressive job at analyzing topics that may threaten a father during this process of family breakup.

One complaint I have about this book is some of the advice he gives will not necessarily work for all couples depending on the age of their children, therefore the opinions of the writer should be absorbed with discretion. A large majority of the children spoken of in the book at the time of the separations were younger, which creates an issue. An eleven-year-old child may have a completely different reaction to a divorce than a 17-year-old, and this age range was not covered enough in the book. Although there are a few parents questioned for the book with older children, an effort could have been made to add more advice for this age group.

Altogether, I found this book informative, insightful, and an all-around captivating read. I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys the topic of family sociology.