

Review of Parenting in Your Own Voice, by Joan L. Reynolds MS and Sheila Dinaburg-Azoff PsyD

When I was a young mom, I can distinctly remember feeling that, somehow, other moms knew what they were doing more than I did. I was just winging it! Most of us are ill-prepared for parenthood—the tantrums, the bedtime dramas, kids' clever manipulations. And when kids get older, there are the worries that they aren't getting enriched enough, are having social problems, or are making poor choices.

How do you know that the decisions you're making with your kids are the right ones? How can you support your child's talents and passions, instill him with good values, and help him become a responsible, well-adjusted, happy adult who won't spend years in therapy dealing with the consequences of your poor parenting?

Learning specialist Joan L. Reynolds MS and pediatric psychologist Sheila Dinaburg-Azoff PhD offer an answer. These parenting coaches have teamed up to write one of the smartest and most original parenting books I've seen. In *Parenting in Your Own Voice: Finding Your Inner Parent to Bring Out the Best in Your Child* (Parent Connection, September 2012), they don't tell you what to do and they don't offer parenting advice. Instead, they show you how to acquire a set of tools, perspectives, and skills that will help you make sound parenting decisions consistently and with confidence. They get you thinking in a new way about your role and ability as a parent.

The big idea of this book is that you—not outside experts or how-to manuals—are the best expert when it comes to parenting your child. You may need to seek help and resources to get more perspective on an issue, but ultimately, you are the one who understands your child best and knows what's right for her.

Drawing from more than 40 combined years as professionals and parenting coaches working with individuals, families, and groups, the authors developed a step-by-step method to give parents with children of any age—from toddler to teen—insights and tools to build a customized parenting plan for their child. This parenting plan is a blueprint—written by you—that will serve as a guide in any situation that arises, and can be updated and altered as the child matures and life situations change.

Designed as a workbook to be used on your own or in a parenting group, the book features fun and interesting exercises, assessments, and "Try This" activities that challenge the reader to dive deeply into the topic at hand. Chapter by chapter, the reader creates building blocks that will later be assembled into a comprehensive parenting plan.

Part I of the workbook gets you to focus on aspects of yourself you probably haven't thought about in a conscious and systematic way. For example, you get the opportunity to map your nine temperament traits and see how aspects of yourself, such as your adaptability or sensitivity, have played a role in how you behave as a person and a parent. I also liked the

chapter on identifying your values—what's important to you and why. The idea is that becoming self-aware makes you a much better parent.

In Part II, the focus turns to your child. Without being too academic or heavy-handed, the authors present a handful of perspectives from which you get to know your child in new and interesting ways. Here you map his nature along those same nine temperament traits, which is eye-opening. You think about the child in the context of her development—and how that plays a role in her behavior. You also identify her preferred learning style, how she expresses her creativity, and where she falls along the eight intelligences. I guarantee you'll acquire a view of your child that's surprisingly complex, colorful, and multifaceted.

Armed with all this information about you and your child, in Part III the authors help you integrate everything you've learned. After naming your parenting priorities—what you most want for your child now and in the future—you then assemble a parenting plan tailored to your individual child that will help you achieve these.

The authors wrote *Parenting in Your Own Voice* with parenting groups in mind, so that of parents could meet together weekly or monthly and work through the 12 chapters. The website ([www.parentinginyourownvoice.com](http://www.parentinginyourownvoice.com)) includes free downloadable templates of key assessments and exercises that can be printed out for those who don't like to write in books, have more than one child, or for coparents who are doing the workbook together.

Both of these women share a deep conviction that parents who become conscious of what they want and need, and really take the time to understand who their children are as unique individuals, will be able to bring out the best in their child and provide them a promising future. This book offers a new kind of support for parents. It empowers them, hones their parenting skills, and provides them with resources and tools that make them self-aware, thoughtful parents. This is a wonderful book I wish I had read when I was a young, inexperienced mom.