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Padman: A Dad's Guide to Buying...Those and Other Tales (eBook)

Mark Elswick

Modern History Press (2011)

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Reviewed by Joseph Yurt for Reader Views (7/11)

As a young man just out of high school, author Mark Elswick experienced a devastating traumatic brain injury (TBI) in a car accident. Although doctors wrote him off, he beat the odds, and not only regained his life, he discovered a single act that is critical to the recovery process for both patients and caregivers. This is a giving back book for Elswick on more than one level. He is donating a percentage of the proceeds from the sale of each book to support TBI research. But, his kindest gift, given to all who will read "Padman: A Dad's Guide to Buying...Those and Other Tales" is the book's collection of humorous short stories. Elswick writes in his preface that he hopes to "...entertain you with humorous stories taken from my life, but also to sprinkle in some more serious stories about my traumatic brain injury incident and other survivor stories." His aim is true; he hits the mark!

While the book targets multiple audiences, the short stories will especially entertain the diverse reader population that can relate to a single parent, in this case the author, living the challenges of raising his daughter. Elswick also hopes his personal stories will provide much needed stress relief and an emotional pit stop for daily caregivers. There are many amusing books, blogs and articles out there chronicling the "Dad raises daughter" scenario. What creates point of difference for this book is Elswick himself and his stream of consciousness writing style. Elswick is quaintly macho - a source of humor in itself, and his story telling is based almost entirely on a streaming dialog in his mind, in which he encourages the reader to join. Among the stories included just for amusement and laughs, I laughed out loud at "Red Flags of Age, Frogger Shopping, Newborn to Dad: No Multi-Tasking and In Front of Me? ('Listen punk! If you ever kiss my daughter again, there will be consequences that you won't like.')

The stories which explore various aspects of TBI are sprinkled in, as directed by Elswick. The design is seamless, a result of the author's clearly established persona, giving the reader a feeling that they are having a relaxed, informal conversation with the author. Among the best examples of these stories is "Little Brooke: A TBI Story ALL Parents Need to Read." In fact, Brooke's story will be compelling for anyone who reads it because it awakens the realization that on any given day, anyone could be affected by TBI. This is the story that is most likely to stimulate a greater interest learning more about the brain and the buzz around TBI. And it that regard, Elswick hits the bull's eye again.

I like Mark Elswick's book a lot. My own personal commitment to being of good humor every day is buoyed by these stories. And, I understand that we are not likely to care deeply about a problem like TBI unless we are familiar with it. Elswick's book compels me to care; to contemplate how I would cope if TBI affected me or someone I loved some day; how I can help those affected now? As Elswick notes, "Learning about traumatic brain injuries can, and does, have that big an influence on one's thinking."

So, as of this writing, I am officially announcing my own support for Mark Elswick, the writer who won his own battle with TBI and is now giving back of himself to those who are continuing or just beginning theirs. "Padman: A Dad's Guide to Buying...Those and Other Tales" offers an "edutaining" read on a subject that is anything but humorous. And it underscores the importance of embracing now the devastation of TBI among the general public, as well as in the face of our affected troops returning home. In the opening paragraph of this review, I mentioned that during his own experience, the author discovered a single act that is critical to the recovery process in general. As the patients and caregivers echo in their stories, that act is support. I highly recommend you begin giving yours by reading the book.