

Perceptions of Disability: Expecting Adam (Non-Fiction) Est. Time: 2 Weeks Reading/45 Minutes Class

Objective

Gain an understanding of how individuals with intellectual disabilities are sometimes perceived.

Synopsis

Martha Beck seems to have it all: a degree from Harvard, entrance to graduate school, a promising career, and an expanding family. However, while at Harvard graduate school, she discovers that her unborn son has Down syndrome. Martha's memoir allows the reader to experience the emotions of a parent's journey as she sorts through her feelings about disability.

Activity

Read the following book and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class.

Title: *Expecting Adam* (2002)

Author: Martha Beck

Publisher: Berkley Books • New York

For Your Information

Individuals with an intellectual disability (ID) often exhibit impairments in cognitive functioning, memory, decision-making skills, adaptive behavior, independent living skills, interpersonal skills, and communication. To learn more about intellectual disabilities, and Down syndrome specifically, visit:

- [Intellectual Disability](#) (Center for Parent Information and Resources)
- [Intellectual Disability](#) (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association)

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. How did Martha and her husband discover that Adam had Down syndrome?
2. Why did so many in the Harvard medical community advise Martha against keeping Adam?
3. Reflect on Martha's conversation with Dr. Grendel. Do you agree with the doctor's opinion? Why or why not?
4. How do you think members of the academic community would have responded to a child with a disability that had no impact on cognitive skills?
5. At the end of Chapter 8, Martha recounts that Adam "was sorry for the pain I felt as I tried to turn him into a 'normal' child and that he loved me despite my many disabilities." Discuss your thoughts on her statement.