Let Me Hear Your Voice: A Family's Triumph Over Autism Study Guide

Let Me Hear Your Voice: A Family's Triumph Over Autism by Catherine Maurice

Contents

Plot Summary

Let Me Hear Your Voice: A Family's Triumph Over Autism by Catherine Maurice is a heart-wrenching story about a family's struggle to help two of their children, Anne Marie and Michel, recover from autism. Diagnosed early, both children were given little chance of success, but through a combination of behavioral therapy and sheer will, their family and therapists helped them to achieve normalcy. It is a story of pain, struggle, love, and faith that lends hope to families of autistic children throughout the world.

Catherine Maurice, a devoted mother of Daniel, gives birth to Anne Marie, and all is well for several months. When Anne Marie is a year and a half, her parents begin to notice disturbing behaviors, such as a general withdrawal from others, repetitive behaviors, a lack of language skills and an overall sense of terror about change that cause them to begin looking for answers. Soon, they receive the diagnosis of autism, and are drawn into a world of despair and anguish. Professionals disappoint them with consistently little hope, but Catherine challenges the system and begins hunting on her own for solutions. She discovers the world of behavioral therapy, and although reluctant to try such extreme measures, she hires Bridget, a sincere therapist, to work with Anne Marie. In addition, she finds Dr. Welch, a supporter of holding therapy. With rigorous training, Anne Marie begins to recover. Originally believing holding therapy is the key, Catherine is eventually convinced that Dr. Welch is a self serving therapist with little to offer, and that it is in fact Bridget and Robin, the speech therapist, who are succeeding in bringing Anne Marie back to the world. Through her faith and through behavioral therapy, Catherine and the others are able to wench Anne Marie from autism, and watch as she slowly regains her sense of normalcy. When things are finally beginning to improve in the family, Catherine begins to worry about her next child, Michel. More outgoing and social than Anne Marie, the concerns are at first limited. But as Michel begins showing many of the same symptoms, the family has no choice but to take Michel in for testing. Soon after, they receive the devastating news that he too is autistic. The family, heartbroken, again journeys to save their son with the same behavioral therapy, and again achieves success.

The novel is not only a support of behavior therapy, but also serves as an attack on many conventional beliefs about the hopelessness of autism. Catherine, through her own painful journey, shows other families there is hope, and that to question those who believe they know best is vital to the success of their children. This is not only a story of faith and hope, but also a story of strength and the overwhelming power of love in overcoming adversity.

Forward and Acknowledgments

Forward and Acknowledgments Summary and Analysis

The Forward, written by Bernard Rimland, PhD, is a heartfelt supportive argument for the use of behavioral modification. Rimland was a mentor to Catherine throughout the novel, and praises her work with her own children, as well as praises her for her insights. Additionally, Rimland promotes all forms of therapy for autistic children, noting the need to try various forms to seek improvement. Rimland then explains behavior modification and summarizes his work in the field. He points out that early behavioral modification has been shown to help over fifty percent of autistic children. He concludes that while many still see this therapy as cruel, those same individuals do not understand modern techniques. In the Acknowledgment section, Catherine thanks many who helped her succeed in helping her children recover from autism. She thanks her husband, Marc, as well as her family, for their support. She also thanks Bridget, Robin, Mary Beth, Anne Marie, and Kelly, all of whom were therapists to her children at one point or another. She thanks Rimland, as well as her friends and her agent and editor for their support in writing the book. She also thanks all who came before her in the fight for autistic children, including Rimland and Dr. Lovaas.

Chapter 1 - Chapter 5

Chapter 1 - Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1 opens with Marc and Catherine looking at their child, Anne Marie, on her first birthday, and noting her seriousness. Catherine notes that one cannot compare children, as their older child, Daniel, was so much more rambunctious. However, Catherine notes now she could sense, even at that early age, that something was amiss with her child. She seems uninterested in her birthday gifts, or in her cake, and is very shy, with little movement. However, her learning seems on track. When the family visits Paris and leaves Anne Marie behind, her sitter notes a lot of crying and unhappiness. When Catherine returns, it is as though Anne Marie does not know her, as the little girl cries incessantly. Over the summer, the crying continues, and any change introduces causes Anne Marie to panic. When the entire family travels to Spain, the family realizes how bad the situation is as Anne Marie continuously cries, shows little interest in her cousins, and becomes obsessive about certain objects. Back in the United States, Catherine finds herself trying to make Anne Marie talk, and begins to question as to what the problem might be.

In Chapter 2, Catherine begins to try to work with Anne Marie, but realizes she is always unhappy, rarely smiles, and says very few words. Catherine begins spending more time with Anne Marie. Others begin to criticize her worries, noting that Anne Marie is likely unhappy that Catherine is pregnant with her third child. Catherine begins to dislike psychoanalytical theories of Anne Marie, as she believes Anne Marie is too young to understand her pregnancy. She begins, instead, to doubt herself as a mother. Catherine begins to seriously research possible problems by reading the Merck Manual. One evening, she finds the description of infantile autism, and mentions similarities to her husband. She breaches the possibility with Dr. Baxter, who also notes his disbelief Anne Marie is autistic. However, when Catherine mentions the lack of speech, the doctor has her make a hearing appointment. Catherine makes the appointment, and experiences her first in many disappointing doctor visits. The individuals at the speech-language clinic note "a problem", and recommend play therapy. When asked about the "problem", the supervisors note they do not diagnose. Catherine disagrees with play therapy, and consults Doctor Baxter, who waits for the report from the center. Once he receives it, he recommends Catherine take Anne Marie to see a neurologist, Dr. DeCarlo. She makes the appointment, but has the baby, Michel. After she is released, Catherine keeps the appointment with Dr. DeCarlo. After an examination of nearly an hour and a half, she diagnoses Anne Marie with infantile autism.

In Chapter 3, DeCarlo suggests immediate therapy for Anne Marie, but mentions only progress rather than cure. Marc and Catherine know autism is considered a life-long disability, and one from which there is no cure. They ask few questions, and Catherine apologizes, believing the autism is her fault. Marc tries to comfort her, but she pulls away. She runs errands on autopilot, not wanting to think about the situation. Soon, however, she breaks down, and returns home to the love of her family.

In Chapter 4, Catherine begins to see Anne Marie's behaviors as what they truly are. She repetitively uses single objects, such as the beak of Big Bird, to touch something else. She runs her hands over radiators incessantly. She spends countless hours staring at inanimate objects. She has no interest in anyone, including her family, and she never smiles. She clearly has no verbal skills. Catherine also realizes Anne Marie has no communication at all, and has never said Mama. In addition, she never maintains eye contact and does not imitate behaviors, as other children do. Catherine attempts to find a doctor to help, but she angrily realizes she is on her own as her own doctor advises she watch St. Elsewhere to see an autistic person, and Anne Marie's future. He tells her nothing can be done. She obtains another diagnosis, from Dr. Berman, who agrees there may be a problem, and advises Anne Marie to attend a therapeutic nursery at the hospital. When pressed, however, he seems not to know what occurs at the nursery, and when Catherine visits the nursery, she finds it to be nothing more than a place where Anne Marie is accepted as autistic. Catherine decides not to enroll Anne Marie.

In Chapter 5, the family notices Anne Marie is getting worse. She ignores all human contact, and her bizarre behaviors increase. She begins toe walking, common for autistic children, and teeth grinding. She also begins self abusive behaviors such as face hitting. Anne Marie finds herself angry often and attempts not to lash out at her other children. She forces herself to spend an hour at least a day with just Daniel, to soothe him as well as to provide a calm point for her. She also forces herself to spend time with her new baby, Michel, and watch as he begins to develop. Marc and Catherine look through photographs, and now can see Anne Marie's withdrawal was almost from birth, and her terror at change was obvious, in hindsight. One morning, Catherine awakens, and convinces herself she no longer has to love Anne Marie, since she is no longer her child, but simply a victim of autism. This lasts several hours, before Catherine realizes she still loves her baby daughter. She and Marc discuss the future, and Marc promises to do whatever is needed, even if that means learning to love without being loved in return.

Chapter 6 - Chapter 11

Chapter 6 - Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 6, the family begins to read more about autism. Some books simply describe the disease and treatments being tested, which include therapies related to speech, neurotransmitter medications, increasing levels of serotonin, treatment for fragile X syndrome, and others. It seems to Catherine these studies will eventually find a cause and cure for autism, but offer no hope now. The family learns of self stimulatory behaviors, such as running hands over a smooth surface and finger curling, which Anne Marie has begun to do. They also learn of perseverative behaviors, or those behaviors that seem to obsess, and that these turn to stereotypical rituals when repeated consistently. They also learn some children are born different; some show autism at around eighteen months, and some not until after age two. The books note many in the past believed autism was the fault of the parents, but Catherine discovers soon this belief is not only in the past. Catherine soon meets with Dr. Doubrovsky, whom she finds to be egocentric and only concerned about her own professional reputation. Again, this doctor attempted to convince Catherine autism is not curable, and again, Catherine finds herself disagreeing.

In Chapter 7, Catherine begins searching for a new way to actually help her daughter. She finds solace in prayer, and discovers a deep seated relief in her faith. A friend calls with news of therapy which involves intense behavioral therapy that appears to be curing children from autism. Dr. Lovaas has developed the program, which involves forty hours a week of one-on-one therapy. Everyone in the child's life is involved, and thus, the therapy is not limited to sessions, but is continual. Nearly half of all children have achieved normal cognitive functioning. In contrast to psychoanalytical approaches, behavioral therapy seeks to alter behaviors through negative and positive reinforcement. Catherine calls the center and obtains information. Shortly after, she receives Ira Cohen's diagnosis of Anne Marie, which reflects autism, and asks his professional opinion of behavioral therapy. He strongly advocates the treatment, and sends Catherine more information. Catherine is contacted by the play therapy center, and is angered by their comments about behavioral therapy, implying Dr. Lovaas uses only highly functioning persons in his studies. Catherine becomes more determined to try behavioral therapy.

In Chapter 8, Marc orders the books and tapes from the Lovaas team, and the family begins to plan a strategy. While Catherine agrees with much of the work, which involves repetition and positive reinforcement until behaviors are achieved, she refuses to use aversive therapy, which involves physical punishment for inappropriate behaviors. She advertises for therapists, and finds Bridget Taylor, a seasoned therapist with autistic children in behavioral therapy. She is knowledgeable and highly motivated, but seems cold to Catherine, who later realizes Bridget is one of the largest blessings in her life. Bridget also notes she has never seen a child recover from autism. Bridget is hired, and Catherine is asked to make a list of positive behaviors she would like increased, and

negative behaviors she would like decreased. Catherine notes her initial disbelief that positive reinforcements such as candy would bring her child from autism, but she makes the lists. Catherine has her doubts, but the therapy begins.

In Chapter 9, Marc, Catherine, Michel, and Anne Marie travel to France to see Marc's parents and have the children baptized. The family finds many who believe emotional trauma is the cause of Anne Marie's problems, and who question their abilities as parents. Even in the United States the couple hear many give their opinions, from the problem being parental to there being no problem at all. However, Catherine continues to find strength in God as the family visits Notre Dame chapel, and Catherine asks God to bring Anne Marie home.

In Chapter 10, Catherine summarizes the findings of all five specialists—that Anne Marie suffers from infantile autism. To pass the time before behavioral therapy begins, Catherine reads "The Siege" by Clara Park. Written during a time when psychoanalysis still blamed the mother, the book notes that autistic behavior is deliberate, and chronicles the mother's journey to lay siege on the walls around her child. Catherine sees this as her calling, and finds the book a call to arms for her. Soon, Robin Taylor, a speech pathologist, joins the team for Anne Marie. She believes strongly that all children, autistic or otherwise, have some form of communication. Robin believes her goal is to change those patterns to be more acceptable forms of communication. Catherine watches the two work together, and within a half hour session, sees results. The first session with Bridget is tough, for both Anne Marie and Catherine. Bridget first puts Anne Marie in a chair. When she cries and attempts to go to the floor, Bridget simply picks her up, and puts her back. This repeats until Anne Marie sits on the chair, whining and crying. Anne Marie looks, for the first time in months, at Catherine, and whines. Catherine leaves the room, horrified and afraid she is making a mistake. Bridget continues to repeat the phrase "Look at me", noting whether Anne Marie does so on her own, with promoting, or not at all. Catherine can hear Bridget positively respond when Anne Marie's actions are appropriate. During the second hour of therapy, Anne Marie begins to accept the reinforcement such as bits of cookie or juice for her positive behaviors. Catherine, feeling lost, admits she has no choice but to continue the therapy. She realizes this type of assault is necessary to save her child. At the end of the chapter, Catherine admits it was in this frame of mind that she found holding therapy, and admits she nearly threw away her one true blessing, Bridget, for the falsity of holding therapy because it, unlike behavioral therapy, promised recovery from love.

In Chapter 11, Catherine explains a friend mentioned a book by Niko and Elizabeth Tinbergen that analyzed autistic children, and found the disease to be a an anxiety dominated emotional conflict within the child. This belief holds that the behaviors of autistic children are the result of fear and avoidance concepts that result from a failure of the mother-child bonding in early life. Although Catherine has already denounced this "fault of the mother" theory, she admits she accepted this idea as therapy for the problem involves a rebonding with the child through holding therapy. Dr. Martha Welch's method involves the forcible holding of a child for an hour each day, during which time the mother lets the child know her true feelings, both good and bad. The session is to end when the child responds with a look, touch to the face, or speech. When Catherine

meets Dr. Welch, she is even more impressed as she seems to ooze care, concern, and love. She explains the therapy to Catherine, and shows her videos of holding therapy. Yet the child in the video is not autistic, and Dr. Welch appears to answer all questions with love, but little honest answers. Catherine reads an article of a girl, Katy, who was cured with holding therapy. However, Catherine's friends, family, and even husband are reluctant to believe, and Marc and Dr. Welch do not get along, once they meet. Catherine, however, agrees to twice a week sessions. Catherine is bitten, scratched, hit, and struggled against for weeks. Eventually, she changes from trying to get a resolution to simply holding her child for an hour, singing to her, at which point Anne Marie seems to relax. Catherine seems to see increased alertness in her child following these sessions, and an increase in her notice of other people. Catherine is thus convinced holding therapy, and Dr. Welch, are her saviors.

Chapter 12 through Chapter 17

Chapter 12 through Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 12, Catherine finds herself defending holding therapy to everyone, while inside fostering guilt that the therapy is not genuine. She is increasingly hostile toward Bridget, even though behavioral therapy appears to be working. Dr. Welch, on the other hand, has become her guiding light, and she believes more in more in her therapy, even as the roots of the "mother-bonding" cause of autism begin to bother her. Dr. Welch encourages her to yell her anger at her child, and Catherine refuses respectfully. Marc stops going to therapy with her at Dr. Welch's. One day, she decides to fire Bridget, but relents when Marc tells her he believes they should continue therapy.

In Chapter 13, Catherine explains that the whole family is becoming involved in the therapy, as they all learn to speak to Anne Marie the way Bridget does, and learn to use positive reinforcement for good behaviors. Catherine notes Anne Marie begins to look at them more, and to become involved in the world. One day, Anne Marie points to a fountain, and then looks at Catherine, as if to show her the water. Catherine now understands the therapy is working. Catherine begins to nag Anne Marie consistently about her behaviors, attempting to stop all self-stimulatory behavior. All family and friends are consistently demanding, and the work begins to pay off as they see Anne Marie becoming more alert and alive. She begins to notice and smile at strangers, and begins to babble in her crib. She also begins to imitate behaviors. Her language also begins to develop again. Catherine, however, still sees holding therapy as the key to this recovery.

In Chapter 14, Catherine admits her relationship with Bridget begins to falter. However, as behavioral therapy is supported by more and more doctors, she feels compelled to allow Bridget to continue. As she watches Bridget, her respect for the young woman grows. Bridget teaches Catherine, through action, how to be demanding and loving simultaneously. Bridget reminds Catherine Anne Marie doesn't know how to pay attention, and this is what they are teaching her. Bridget takes each lesson and breaks it into small parts. All tasks begin with words, followed by modeling, and finally, by prompting. This technique slowly introduces a child to what it is they are expected to do. Once learned, the new idea is then expanded. Incidental teaching, or the use of a child's notice of the environment to prompt a lesson, is also used. Over time, Anne Marie's expressive language, or her naming of things, increases dramatically, but her receptive language, or her understanding of things, still lags behind. While Dr. Welch continues to assert Anne Marie does understand, and simply chooses not to care, Catherine begins to doubt this increasingly, and focuses more on Bridget's work. One day, Anne Marie goes to the door when Bridget arrives, looks into her eyes, and smiles. Catherine is convinced the therapy is working.

In Chapter 15, Catherine again notes Anne Marie's swift recovery. She comes alive outside, and names everything she can. Additionally, she becomes more aware of

Daniel. One day, as Michel sits in Catherine's lap, Anne Marie comes over to shove him off, showing sibling rivalry, which is another good sign of recovery. On another evening, Catherine and Anne Marie are outside at dusk, when Anne Marie starts giggling and looking down the street. Catherine realizes Marc is coming down the road. When she lets Anne Marie down, she runs into her father's arms. Catherine begins using modeling and prompting, as well, and has much success. Bridget teaches Anne Marie more about how to play and interact with the world, and Catherine begins to teach her how to try different foods, and different activities. In this way, the therapy introduces change as a desired aspect of life. She begins to force her into different situations. In one example, Anne Marie whines near Catherine's father at a plate of crackers, clearly wanting to try one. Catherine takes Anne Marie's hand, and places it on the crackers, showing her she can take one without someone else getting it for her. The family then praises her animatedly. Between them all, they begin to shape Anne Marie's behaviors.

In Chapter 16, Dr. Welch and Catherine's relationship becomes more strained. Dr. Welch invites her to a holding session at the Mothering Center in Connecticut, where the BBC will be filming a documentary. Catherine goes, hoping to meet other caring parents, and wishing to support holding therapy while advocating behavioral approaches as well. When Catherine attends, however, she sees severely autistic children whose mothers, while holding them, scream at them in anger and guilt. She hears mother's discuss their own guilt about their failures as mothers, and speak of Dr. Welch as their god. Catherine now understands this refusal to belief in autism as a biological or neurological disease, since, as such, there would be less hope for a cure. After the session, Catherine talks to the BBC crew, and explains her support of holding therapy, but her rejection of the supposed cause of autism. Returning home, Catherine writes a letter, supporting holding therapy as well as behavioral therapy, to Dr. Rimland, a renowned researcher in the field of autism. Catherine writes of the various therapies she is using, and shows the letter to Bridget and Robin, whom she mentions briefly. The both show support, although understandably disappointed at Catherine's refusal to abandon faith in holding therapy. Dr. Welch asks to keep a copy, and soon tells her she is distributing it to holding therapy enthusiasts. Catherine feels a pang of doubt, knowing Dr. Welch should have asked permission. Catherine begins to question others using the therapy, and finds her doubts increasing.

In Chapter 17, Catherine notes her daughter's increase in word use only serves to make Catherine want more, such as the combination of words. Robin and Bridget explain that the goal of this phase of speech was the use of simple words and phrases to form pragmatic generalizations, or for Anne Marie to use the learned words in new ways. Anne Marie is picking up words, and will, eventually, begin to use them in combination. Marc and Catherine begin to speculate that what they are doing is restructuring the brain to think in different ways, much like teaching a stroke victim to relearn language. One day, when Marc comes home, Anne Marie says "Hi Daddy", causing a giddy eruption from both Catherine and Bridget. However, other behaviors begin to increase, such as an increase in crying, whining, toe walking, teeth grinding, and other behaviors associated with autism, which Catherine believes increased due to the increased pressures on Anne Marie. Bridget explains that immediately rushing in to stop these behaviors is a reward for Anne Marie, and thus, that such behaviors should be ignored

as much as possible. They family also notes her social abilities appear to be the most challenging to overcome. One night, as Catherine puts Anne Marie down, who is sick with a fever and cough, Anne Marie calls for her by calling "Mama" across the room. Catherine, crying, picks her up and begins to soothe her.

Chapter 18 - Chapter Chapter 23

Chapter 18 - Chapter Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 18, Anne Marie begins to notice her siblings more frequently, and Catherine and Marc are impressed with Bridget, even as others show aversion to behavioral therapy. Catherine realizes some show dislike for the therapy because they do not understand it, but others, she believes, hold the view erroneously because they have never needed to use it. Catherine, while she does not herself use adversives, does note that for some children, such actions may be needed to stop self-harming behaviors.

In Chapter 19, Anne Marie begins to use two word sentences. Dr. Welch and Catherine continue to have problems, and Catherine begins to further doubt the mother bonding theory of autism. She reads one of the first books on autism, where Bruno Bettelheim compares autism to a concentration camp, where there is no hope. These individuals, he believes, are in such a state due to extreme situations in early childhood brought on by pathological mothers. Bettelheim speaks against behaviorism, calling it robotic programming for children, and on reflection, Catherine realizes the Tinbergens do the same. When she examines Dr. Welch's own beliefs, she finds them similar. Catherine makes the trip to the holding therapy clinic only twice more. On one occasion, she witnesses a mother whose child has hurt his head asking for ice, and being told to worry less about his bump and more about resolution. The second occasion, Catherine witnesses a mother violently holding her son on the floor while he is screaming "No!" in pain. Catherine does not return, but continues her own forms of holding therapy at home.

in Chapter 20, Catherine praises those who helped her through such a troubled time. She finds ways to fight against those who disbelieve the diagnosis, or those who speak against behaviorism. Catherine struggles against individuals who try to tell her how to help Anne Marie, and how to raise her. Bridget and Catherine force Anne Marie to walk, although it is horrifying. Catherine praises Dr. DeCarlo, Dr Cohen, Bridget, and Robin for their help, as well as any others who assisted her. She particularly thanks Dr. Rimland, who begins a correspondence with her that she finds informative and useful, as well as comforting. She notes he was primarily responsible for killing the "mother to blame" ideas of the past, and to push forward possible cures.

In Chapter 21, Catherine uses songs, dancing, Play-doh, blocks, and other toys to engage Anne Marie to play as she becomes better at modeling and engaging her child in the world. One day, her face lights up as Grandma arrives. On another, she whines for Catherine to finish putting together a tricycle, showing an interest in her world. Even Bridget notes the program is having a resounding success. She begins to mimic Daniel more often. Catherine notes that as a therapist, Daniel was perfect, as he saw nothing abnormal about Anne Marie. The two become inseparable. Anne Marie, however, begins to echo others incessantly, and uses sounds rather than words to speak. These

eventually fade over time. Her fears continue to require constant pressuring. In one situation, she is frightened by a dog. She cries for the entire weekend, and is fearful of dogs to the point of hysteria. Finally, Catherine begins to tell her many stories where Anne Marie is scared by a dog, but yells at the dog. This gives Anne Marie power over the fear, and eventually abates it. Anne Marie begins to use pronouns more correctly, as well as to invite others into play. Marc and Catherine make an appointment with Dr. Cohen to reevaluate Anne Marie, and the testing shows Anne Marie to be in normal range. Catherine struggles to explain how proud she is of her daughter, and how to thank Bridget and Robin.

In Chapter 22, Catherine notes that therapy continues, in an effort to further increase Anne Marie's linguistic and social skills. Dr. Welch returns from England, and Catherine calls her, sharing her good news. She is asked to speak to the producers again of the documentary on holding therapy. She does so, but also touts behavioral therapy. Anne Marie begins preschool, and Catherine attends school with her, furthering her skills and showing the instructors the best way to handle her learning. She is trained to ask for things, as well as to respond to others. In the fall, the Lovaas clinic does an in-home visit with the Maurice's, and notes the remarkable improvement. The therapist has several suggestions, such as to work on reciprocal conversation, fine motor coordination, emotional recognition, and other skills. Anne Marie continues to show improvement as she learns past tense verbs and pronoun use. By November, Catherine is no longer attending preschool with Anne Marie. Catherine states she now knows they have won the battle.

In Chapter 23, Catherine has an opportunity to view the documentary about holding therapy, and is sickened. The stories told all show resounding successes, even though Catherine knows none are true. Her own testimony is edited together to sound as if she is supporting holding therapy alone for autism. There are scenes of Katy, the young woman "cured" of autism that Dr. Welch often speaks of, with her mother guiding her hand across paper to write words. Dr. Welch appears to again praise herself and holding therapy, and notes it will cure many illnesses caused by pathological mothers. Catherine calls Dr. Rimland, appalled, and while he is sympathetic, he is not surprised. Catherine lodges a formal complaint, but withdraws it on threats of lawsuits. She is clearly angry at Dr. Welch, who was once her mentor and who violated her trust so profusely. Marc lovingly reminds her their daughter is recovering, and that truth survives. Catherine is sickened, however, by the number of families made to believe in holding therapy, when behavioral therapy is the saving grace for Anne Marie.

Chapter 24 - Chapter Chapter 29

Chapter 24 - Chapter Chapter 29 Summary and Analysis

In May in Chapter 24, the family receives another visit from the Lovaas clinic, but Catherine disagrees with some of his techniques. Marc notes they need to adapt every program to suit their daughter, and Catherine agrees. She points out there are three things about behavioral modification one should know. First, all therapists vary. Secondly, the range of recovery from behavioral therapy ranges drastically from one person to the next. Third, behavior modification is a powerful tool, and one that can harm as well as heal. Bridget herself recalls a session she watched where a therapist verbally yelled at the child as motive for behaviors. Catherine notes, however, sometimes aversives are needed, as in the case of self-harming behaviors. In one case, she recalls a slap on the thigh stopped head hitting behaviors in one child that had already caused blindness. In another case, they stopped screaming episodes. However, she notes, these were used by people who already knew and evaluated the child, which is necessary for any therapy to work. Catherine reminds parents to change pre-written programs as needed for their own belief systems and their own children.

In Chapter 25, Catherine notes that by spring, Anne Marie is still recovering well. She is shy, but learning well and beginning to have friends. She takes initiative with some conversations, and Catherine decides to have her language reevaluated. She sees Margery Rappaport, who reports Anne Marie is above average in her sentence length, and there are only small lags in expressive language. She is adept in receptive language, as well. Overall, her language is, at worst, slightly delayed. She also takes Anne Marie to Dr. Perry, who once told her autism could not be cured. His evaluation notes tremendous recovery, noting only small residua of autism, such as a sing song voice, and can be easily distracted. He notes, at the end, that in his career, he has never seen a child, in one month, recover from autism, and he showers praise on the Maurice's for their achievement.

In Chapter 26, Catherine begins to worry about Michel, who is now eighteen months of age. His language is slow, and he is prone to angry fits. She watches videos of his development, noting a slow increase in whining and crying, and a decrease in verbal skills. She also sees a slow social withdrawal, and notes toe walking. In July, they take Anne Marie for a check up with Dr. Cohen, and take Michel, as well. Anne Marie's prognosis is wonderful, and Dr. Cohen remarks she is nearly to a normal range on all skills. Dr. Cohen then examines Michel. He is functioning six months behind his age, and Dr. Cohen tells them to monitor his progress very carefully. She begins to compare him to other children, and notes delays. She takes him to see several psychologists, but the evaluations do not go well as Catherine claims her anxiety is spreading to her son. When Robin evaluates him, she too sees signs for concern. At the end of chapter 26,

after a severe crying bout and several fearful tantrums, Catherine senses her son is also autistic.

In Chapter 27, Catherine agonizes about telling Marc, who adores his children and centers his life around them. One evening, she explains that she tried to get him to say ba-ba, one of the first words he repeated as a baby, and received no response. Marc tells her to call Dr. Cohen and Dr. DeCarlo, as he too knows the truth. Catherine determines she wants someone to evaluate Michel that knows nothing of the family history. Dr. Gershwin examines Michel and evaluates his behaviors. The diagnosis is infantile autism. She tells Marc, and he visibly falters. Clearly in pain, Catherine reminds him they have recovered one child, and that they can recover another. He goes to his son, who is moving a train back and forth endlessly across the floor. When it becomes stuck, he screeches in anger, grabs his father's hand and thrusts it toward the train, much like Anne Marie used to do. Marc rises, and leaves the room. Catherine again rallies, and enlists Bridget, Robin, and other therapists to begin working with Michel, using the same therapy as that used with Anne Marie. Unlike Anne Marie, however, Michel throws violent fits instead of whimpering. Dr. DeCarlo and Dr. Cohen both diagnose him with autism. Catherine does a few holding therapy sessions with Michel, but lets it go, knowing behavioral therapy is the tool for recovery.

In Chapter 28, Catherine admits the first month of therapy did not work well, as Michel was so resistant. She admits she does not know how autism works, and sees continuous decline in Michel's behaviors. However, once again she turns to her faith, and realizes she is not in control, but that God can and will see her through. Then one day, as she stands outside the therapy room, she heard Bridget praise Michel, and hears him begin to babble and laugh. She knows he will recover.

In Chapter 29, Catherine works with Michel to respond, and succeeds in forcing him to ask for trains. She works with him daily for two hours, and begins to see recovery, using songs, games, and other toys to entice him to respond. In April, the family brings in Mary Beth Villani and Anne Marie Larkin as therapists, as well as Kelly McDonough. The training is for twenty-two hours per week with therapists, and endless hours with Catherine. Bridget becomes more of a director of therapy as the others take on more hours. Michel responds well with good communication and more socially adept behaviors. His language is slower in coming, but does improve. One day on a trip, Michel begins to cry fearfully. Unsure of the situation, the family realizes he cannot see Daniel and is fearful he has been left behind. Once he realizes Daniel is there, he calms immediately.

Chapter 30 - Index

Chapter 30 - Index Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 30, Catherine admits she did not adapt well to ignoring Michel's crying, and that had she been more able to ignore it, he may have stopped faster. She notes she did not want to reinforce his behaviors, but that she felt compelled to hold her child, and believes other parents must feel their way through these challenges, as well, doing what is best for themselves. She also points out the problem stems from psychoanalytical thought that pushes the blame onto the mother. As such, the mother then feels torn between her desire to soothe her child and behavioral therapy methods of ignoring the behavior. She stresses a lack of help from the professional fields, and spells out for the reader techniques she used for her own children.

In Chapter 31, Catherine informs the reader Anne Marie will be starting Daniel's school, and the family has not told them about Anne Marie's previous condition, for fear of labeling her. Anne Marie is quiet in school, but does well. Catherine sets up play dates to give Anne Marie more socialization. Two months later, the family takes Michel in for reevaluation, and find he is achieving a low normal score. He again has residual effects, but Catherine knows those will fade. She calls Rimland, who advises she write a book to help other parents.

In Chapter 32, Michel begins school, and Cathrine finds many who disbelieve he was diagnosed properly, as he is seemingly normal now. Mary, a social worker, is one such person, and although Catherine likes her now, she admits to being very angry with her in the beginning. Michel's school does not begin well, in that he is angry, and throws tantrums. Rachel, the school director, finds Catherine in a hall horrified, as Anne Marie has spent the whole day by herself, as well. Rachel hugs her, and tells her they will make it through. Catherine thanks God for these individuals. When a breakthrough occurs in class, the teachers are highly emotional, and Catherine uses high praise to encourage Michel. Slowly, Michel begins to cooperate to where Catherine is no longer needed in school. He is reevaluated, and is functioning in the normal area, with little residua.

In Chapter 33, Catherine cautions parents against miracle cures, and reminds them recovery from autism is a long, painful process. She again notes her preferences to behavioral therapy, and denounces those who rule this therapy out in favor of psychoanalytical blaming on the mother and acceptance for the child. She categorizes the psychodynamic camp into three variations. The first involves caring individuals who attempt to bring the child into the world through "respectful choices", which simply means acceptance of inappropriate behaviors. Catherine is particularly critical of the "Option Process", a program for teaching children to love themselves as a cure for autism. The second variation is, according to Catherine, is that the therapist is seen as a seer, in the they alone are believed to be able to interact and communicate with the autistic child. They alone can interpret behaviors, and are never wrong. She notes this

is true in the US as well as in areas such as France. The third variation is that the therapist is the savior and the healer. Catherine attacks these ideas, choosing to focus on a highly popular book, Dibs in Search of Self, by Virginia Axline. Catherine notes the flaws in this novel about an autistic child, from the blame on the mother to the psychodynamic approach to therapy to her own exalted sense of self. She also notes concerns about therapy centers and sexually related charges, and notes her belief that in some cases, these charges against parents simply show the stereotypes professionals have against parents of autistic children. She concludes by reminding parents to try different therapies for their own children.

In Chapter 34, Anne Marie receives high praise from the teachers at her school, and Michel does, as well. Dr. Cohen sees both children again, and reports them as normal, with very few, if any, residua left. No more followups are needed. Catherine reports Anne Marie is fragile, and at times must be reminded that she herself can do things on her own. Bridget wanted to track the children for a few more years, but the family decided they wanted the children to feel and exist in a normal environment. Catherine describes a conversation with all three of her children, and now, all appear to be functioning fine.

In Catherine's Recovery, Catherine admits she has guilt, since her children are recovered and others are not. She finds herself worrying about behaviors others would find normal in children, such as forgetfulness and aggressiveness. She finds if she trusts in the children's teachers, she can overcome such anxiety, and lists several positive reports from them in regards to the children, and she reminds parents that anxieties can spread to children. She also notes that the sadness she feels for others is much more difficult to overcome, even as other parents remind her their lives are also filled with rich and happy moments. She again recounts a conversation with her children, and notes they are still progressing.

In "Some Further Thoughts on Recovery", Catherine gives parents several tips on what is needed for a behavioral program, which include knowledgeable therapists, daily data collection, and a director of schools willing to give information. She notes not all children will recover, and gives several accounts of other parents and their children, some of whom recover, and some who do not. She also gives advice on how to secure funding for therapy, as the US Dept of Education is required to provide therapy for all children. She gives ways to explain to school boards what is needed, and gives advice on securing insurance funding, as well. She also notes it is up to the parents to take charge of the educational process.

In the "Afterword", written by Ivar Lovaas himself, he first praises Catherine for her work. He then notes the power of behavioral therapy, and reminds that it can be harmful as well as helpful. He notes that positive outcomes can ensure, such as more positive behaviors and an increase in cognitive functioning, but also notes there can be detriments, such as slower learning, relapse, and unsuccessful integration. He again reminds parents that the task is daunting, but can be successful in some circumstances.

In Appendix I, Catherine discusses the diagnosis for autism, and notes differences between autism and pervasive developmental disorders, and reminds parents that both are considered lifelong disabilities. She urges parents to read about any diagnosis and to discover treatment for each. In Appendix II, Catherine lists places parents can go for more information, and includes mailing addresses and telephone numbers. She also provides a glossary of terms. She then describes, in detail, the curriculum used for Michel, in an effort to show parents a typical curriculum. Finally, she provides the final speech and language evaluation of Michel, to show parents the tests used to evaluate his performance. At the end of the novel, there is an index.

Characters

Catherine Maurice

Catherine Maurice is the mother of two autistic children and the author of the book. Catherine is a good mother with a strong faith in God and a huge respect for her family. When she learns her daughter is autistic, Catherine begins a crusade to find the best possible therapy for her child. Although she is reluctant to try behavioral therapy since it seems so harsh, she relies on statistics that show a high success rate. However, Catherine is plagued with doubts, fears, and anxieties about her abilities as a mother, as the scientific field of autism attempts several times to blame the mothers of children for the disease. Through it all, Catherine continues to rise above these notions, and fights for her child's well-being, regardless of what others think of her. She is an angry woman in terms of how psychoanalytical approaches treat the disease, and often digresses into angry lectures on the dangers of such ideas for autistic children. However, it is clear her anger is not self righteous, but is instead aiming to stop incorrect notions, and to direct research into the appropriate areas. She clearly loves her daughter, and her family, and is filled with warmth and compassion. When Catherine's third child is also diagnosed as autistic, Catherine admits she feels less confident in his recovery. However, yet again, she rises up and begins to combat his disease in the same manner as Anne Marie's. She fights for her children, and eventually wins, using faith, knowledge, and her own parental abilities to teach her children a new way of life.

Anne Marie

Anne Marie is Catherine's second child. She is a beautiful young girl, but is extremely shy from birth, and seems consistently fearful of anything new. Over time, her behaviors begin to become more bizarre, and include toe walking, teeth grinding, self hitting, and repetitive, ritualistic behaviors. She becomes completely unaware of the world around her, including her parents, and can remain motionless for hours on end. When Catherine reads a description of autistic children, she begins to realize the problem, and after several diagnosis, she accepts her daughter as autistic. When Anne Marie begins behavioral therapy, she is reluctant, but within a short time she begins to slowly regain her skills. She becomes more aware and is able to better use language. Her toughest battle is with social abilities, but these too come slowly with time, although she remains shy and fearful by nature. In the end, she regains normal functioning, but is still, according to her mother, fragile and delicate.

Michel

Michel is Catherine's third child. His birth, in the midst of the diagnosis of Anne Marie, is a blessing to both Catherine and Marc, as he appears normal is every respect. He is social, warm, loving, and needy as a baby, and is completely opposite from Anne Marie.

As time moves on, however, Michel begins to be more socially withdrawn, and more angry with any change introduced. His vocabulary begins to shrink, his movements become more ritualistic, and his behaviors become more withdrawn. Catherine begins to worry, and takes him in, only to have him, too, diagnosed as autistic. Catherine begins the same program with Michel, but it does not go as well in the beginning, simply because his behaviors are so much more violent that those of Anne Marie. His rejection of therapy is anger, screaming, and wailing, as opposed to simple withdraw. However, with constant work and pressure from therapists and family, he is able to regain normal functioning.

Bridget Taylor

Bridget Taylor is the first therapist Catherine hires for Anne Marie's behavioral therapy. Bridget is young, but has much experience in dealing with both autistic children and their parents. She is professional, knowledgeable, and extremely hard working. In the beginning, Catherine sees her as cold and heartless as she repeatedly ignores the crying of Anne Marie and sticks to the drills being taught. Over time, however, Catherine is able to see that Bridget is simply extremely good at what she does. She is not cold, but is instead determined to do what is best for the child, even at the risk of seemingly harsh to the outside world. Bridget uses her own money to provide tools to teach Anne Marie, and endlessly drills her, guides her, and manipulates her in an effort to achieve normal behavioral functioning. Catherine begins to respect her, and then begins to learn from her example as she herself begins to use the same tools as Bridget to pull her daughter from autism. It is Bridget and her therapy who eventually pull both Anne Marie and Michel from autism and into the real world.

Dr. Welch

Dr. Martha Welch is a child psychiatrist who supports the ideas of holding therapy. Originally, Catherine finds Dr. Welch to be a supportive, caring, loving therapist whose ideas of autism, while different from Catherine's, appear to help Catherine explain some of the symptoms she sees in her own daughter. However, over time, Catherine is able to see her as what she truly is, a woman so concerned with her own status that she is willing to sell parents a method that does not work for fame and popularity. Welch is convinced the mother is to blame for autism, and that only through her method of holding therapy can one achieve "success". She abuses Catherine's trust in her, and in the end, Catherine rejects holding therapy.

Marc

Marc Maurice is the pseudonym for the husband of Catherine. Marc is a sensitive man who clearly loves his family, and would do anything to help his children. When Catherine seeks him for comfort and security, he rises to the task. When his children need him to provide help with therapy, he does so with patience and kindness. It is Marc Catherine

looks to for emotional support, and Marc she looks to for opinions and assistance. Further, Marc's employment, which takes him on the road often, allows the family to afford the therapy needed.

Bernard Rimland

Bernard Rimland is one of the world's most knowledgeable doctors who deals with autism. He acts as a mentor to Catherine throughout the novel. Catherine sends Rimland a summary of her own work with Anne Marie, and Rimland takes the time to write back in a positive manner. It is clear through his writing that he respects Catherine's opinions and seeks her input, making her think about the therapies she chooses. The two begin corresponding, and in him, she finds a doctor she respects, and who respects her in return. He advises her on holding therapy, as well as behavioral therapy. In addition, Rimland's work condemns the work of psychoanalysts. His introduction to the novel praises Catherine for her work, as well as supports behavioral therapy in tune with vitamin supplement therapy.

O. Ivar Lovaas

While a minor character in the novel, Ivar Lovaas is, in part, a huge influence, in that it was his behavioral therapy that led Catherine to develop her own program for her children. Lovaas also provides more information about this therapy in his afterward, written specifically for the novel. While he certainly advocates behavioral therapy, he also stresses the importance of seeking out and attempting all forms of therapy in an effort to help the child. He also advocates strong training for therapists and a program specially designed for one's own child.

Dr. Regina DeCarlo

Dr. Regina DeCarlo is a pediatric neurologist who works with the family's doctor, Dr. Baxter. DeCarlo is the first to diagnose Anne Marie officially with infantile autism, and to recommend therapy. She also later diagnoses Michel. DeCarlo, throughout the novel, does not give up hope on Catherine or her children. While her role is minor, she is symbolic of those in the medical profession who believe recovery for autism is possible.

Robin

Robin is a speech therapist who works with Anne Marie and later, with Michel. Robin works for Mt. Sinai Hospital's Communication Disorders Clinic. She is in her mid-twenties, with short dark hair and dark eyes. Robin's role in the recovery of Anne Marie and Michel is to take their limited communication skills and shape them into more appropriate forms of communication. Robin sets up situations under which the children are more likely to request something, or make some form of communicative action. Using toys and other distractions, Robin models words and phrases for the children to

understand, and then uses prompting to continue to encourage communications. Over time, such repetitive drills allow the children to learn appropriate skills.

Daniel

Daniel is the oldest child of the Maurice's, and the only one not diagnosed as autistic. He is a happy child who tries to help his siblings, based on his mother's examples of behavioral therapy. He is happy to play with his siblings, once they begin to notice him and desire his company. As a sibling, he treats his brother and sister as though they were not ill, since his child's mind does not equate them with illness. His normalcy is, in part, what allows Catherine to remain sane as her other children drift further into autism.

Objects/Places

Autism

Autism is a little understood disease occurring in early childhood that results in a range of behaviors, including extreme aloneness, ritualistic behaviors, speech disorders, delayed onset of speech, and uneven intellectual performance.

Perseverative Behaviors

Perseverative behaviors are any behaviors to which an autistic child returns to repeatedly, to the exclusion of social interaction. These often include hand flapping, teeth grinding, toe walking, and other behaviors.

Stereotypical Rituals

Stereotypical rituals are perseverative behaviors that become highly patterned and repetitive to the point that they become rituals to the child.

Vineland Adaptive Scales

The Vineland Adaptive Scales is a screening test for developmental maturity that is often used to help diagnose autistic children.

Incidental Teaching

Incidental teaching occurs when the therapist takes natural opportunities to teach a child goals he or she happens to be working with at the time. These opportunities occur with anything that may capture the attention of the child.

Pragmatic Generalization

Pragmatic generalization is the modeling of a word or concept in other contexts and other semantic structures to help reinforce the lesson being taught, which in turn helps the child to learn to generalize concepts over a broader spectrum.

Behavioral Therapy

Behavioral therapy is a focus of learning on verbal and nonverbal communication in play, cognition, and socialization. This therapy revolves around the use of positive and

negative reinforcement, which is used to help increase desired behaviors and decrease undesired behaviors.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis, developed by Sigmund Freud, is a theory of human psychological functioning and behavior that often links a psychological problem with early childhood experiences.

Holding Therapy

Holding therapy is a technique touted by some that involves holding a child lovingly, although by force if necessary, to help bond the mother and child relationship some believe damaged in autistic children.

Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior

Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior, or DRA, is the attempt to stop an unwanted behavior through rewards given to a child for more desirable behaviors.

Expressive Language

Expressive language is the actual use of words, and therefore teaching expressive language is to teach one to use words appropriately.

Receptive Language

Receptive language is the understanding of language, and therefore, teaching receptive language is to teach one to understand distinction between words.

Modeling

Modeling is a therapists correct use of a word in an effort to show a child. For example, modeling the word up might involve using the word to point to the ceiling.

Prompting

Prompting is a technique used to cue a child as to a desired response. For example, a prompt for the word up might involve pointing to the ceiling.

Themes

Autism

As the primary focus of the book, autism plays a vital role in the lives of all characters mentioned in the novel. As described, autism is, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - Third Edition, a type of pervasive developmental disorder. This disorder begins in early childhood, and its diagnostic criteria includes impairment in social abilities, communication, and imaginative activities. In addition, those with such a disorder display restricted interest in activities. In addition, there are several other features which can be associated with the disease, such as certain mannerisms, sleep disorders, odd responses to stimuli, and others. Particularly, autism results in a range of behaviors, including extreme aloneness, ritualistic behaviors, speech disorders, delayed onset of speech, and uneven intellectual performance.

In the novel, Anne Marie, a two-year-old child diagnosed with the disease, begins life as a bright and active child, but slowly regresses. She loses her speech, begins to repeat odd behaviors such as running her hand along radiators and other objects, loses interest in those around her, and begins to become extremely isolated from the world. Words she knew become nearly unspoken, and she becomes frantic when change is introduced into her life. Her parents notice such limitations, but teeter between seeing a problem and dealing with a standard two-year-old child. Eventually, these loving parents take Anne Marie to several doctors, all of whom diagnose her as autistic. Her behaviors continue to spiral downward and come to include self destructive behaviors. Michel, her brother, displays many of the same behaviors by age two, but also shows a high amount of rage and anger instead of fear.

In the novel, the descriptions of these behaviors, along with the vast amount of diagnostic information, result in a constant reevaluation of the disease, and as such, a large amount of the material within the book. In the book, several diagnostic techniques are presented, but the vast amount of research and information presented pertains to behavioral therapy, which helps nearly half of all patients to recover. While the author notes it is not a miracle cure, this therapy does appear to be vastly more successful in treating autism than any other form of therapy, and in the case of Anne Marie and Michel, this therapy helps them to recover a normal life..

Rejection of Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis, and the author's extreme bias against it, plays an important role in the book as the family of an autistic child are bombarded with ideas and concepts centered around this theme. The basic premise presented throughout the book is that the psychoanalytical approach to autism believes strongly, to this day, that autism is a deliberate message sent to the world by the child or person who is afflicted. The

symptoms of psychoanalysis were, originally, seen as choices made, rather than symptoms of a disease. Later in the novel, the Tinbergens introduce another idea about autism, that it is an anxiety dominated disease that stems from a failure of the mother-child bonding in the first year of life. This view, also psychoanalytical, is what leads the author to attempt holding therapy with her child. This viewpoint states that, as a result of this lack of bonding, the child has an approach-avoidance conflict, where he or she wants to be socially interactive, but has a strong desire to avoid all such contact. Without a bond to the mother, the child feels there is no secure place to venture from in new situations. As a result, the person is locked in the state of an infant, which result in childlike behaviors. Thus, all behaviors can be explained as stemming from this approach-avoidance conflict. Finger curling is representative of approach and withdrawal, seizures are an escape mechanism from conflict, lack of speech is a choice, made due to the child's terror.

At first, the author is willing to accept at least some of these ideas as truth. Over time, however, she is convinced these individuals are blaming the mother and father for an illness that is not related to the psychological state of childhood at all. Catherine comes to believe, as do many others, that autism can stem from neurological or biological origins, and has nothing to do with mother-child bonding. Catherine, by the end of the novel, sees such views as being harmful to the study of autism, since the theory seeks to blame external forces for something she sees as a medical issue.

Power of Love

The power of love to overcome obstacles is a primary focus of the novel, as well. Catherine Maurice learns her daughter is autistic, and immediately begins seeking resolution to the problem. It is clear from her writings that she is on a mission to save her daughter, without regard to cost or effort required. Catherine and her husband, Marc, both begin to do whatever they can to help their daughter, from lengthy research to long hours of therapy to prayer to consultation with many doctors. Their efforts lead them to examine their own opinions and to reevaluate everything in their lives. Catherine finds behavioral therapy and begins, as she calls it, a "siege" on her daughter. This is not done out of anger or frustration, but out of the pure love of a mother toward her daughter, and later, her son. It is because of Catherine's love and dedication that Anne Marie is able to recover.

Marc, Catherine's husband, shows equally the power of love. While Marc's role in the therapy of Anne Marie is more limited because of his job, Marc holds Catherine together during a time when she is unable to help herself. It is Marc's love for her that gives her strength, his shoulder she cries on, his wisdom she looks to, his opinion she counts on. Marc uses all weapons in his arsenal to help Catherine, showing again that love can overcome almost anything. The therapists, too, use their own love for children to help them. This holds true even for those therapists Catherine dismisses. While some may not be able to help cure autism, many of them use their love as a strength to help them help others. Even Daniel, the children's older brother, uses his love for his siblings to help him become involved in the behavioral therapy, as do Marc and Catherine's family.

From parents to therapists to family and friends, it is love, and the strength given to people from love, that allows this family to heal.

Style

Perspective

This novel is told from a first person perspective, which is necessary for the true feeling of the author's points to come through. As the mother of not one, but two autistic children, Catherine is a strong voice for the tormented parent fighting for his or her child. This perspective allows readers to understand the true thoughts, feelings, and emotions of one who is fighting the battle firsthand. The agony of being told there is no hope, the struggle to find a cure or recovery, and the immense joy of seeing a child improve is understand through the thoughts, words, and actions of the firsthand viewpoint. Without this view, these vital emotional components would be lost, and the book would not be nearly as passionate.

As a narrator, Catherine is admittedly biased toward the behavioral therapy method of teaching autistic children and against all forms of psychotherapy. These biases are not hidden, and are in fact not only admitted but are described and supported by Catherine herself. In this way, the first person advantage not only allows the reader to understand the writer's own beliefs, but allows that writer to defend those beliefs against other methods in the field. Having been through the diagnosis process with her own personal friends and family, Catherine is able to present a first person viewpoint that is logical, informative, and reliable.

Tone

The tone of the novel ranges between a variety of extremes as the author pours her thoughts, experiences, and feelings into the novel. At times, Catherine can be extremely partisan, in that she is clearly a strong advocate for behavioral therapy for autistic children. Having tried a variety of methods herself, Catherine uses her bias to argue support for this method, and for her rejection of other methods of treatment. On the other hand, Catherine's absolute rejection of other methods is at times tempered with objectivity, in that she herself admits several times to recognizing that for some children, behavioral therapy may not be the best option.

At other times, the tone of the book is completely objective, as Catherine discusses her own logical deductions about autism, and the prognosis of children with the disease. Still at other times, the tone is one of despair, in that Catherine discusses her own times of a loss of faith in God as well as in humanity and medicine. However, throughout the entire novel, there is an underlying tone of hope, in that regardless of the content at the time, Catherine never gives up hope on either of her children. The switch in tone throughout the novel is necessary to convey the true range of emotions felt by this family on their extraordinary journey and to explain the many experiences of the author.

Structure

The novel is divided into several sections, separated by content. First, there is a forward by Bernard Rimland, to whom Catherine refers several times in the novel. Next is an acknowledgments section, where Catherine thanks those individuals who have provided vital support to her and her family. Part I of the novel, titled "Anne-Marie", is the story of Anne Marie's fight out of autism, and is twenty-five chapters in length. Part II, titled "Michel", is the story of Michel's fight through autism, and is encompassed by chapters twenty-six through thirty-four. Part III, titled "Catherine's Recovery?" discusses Catherine's own battle to recover from the fight for her children, and is just one short chapter. Part IV is a discussion of other individuals with autism, how to pay for therapy, and contains many practical points for parents of autistic children. This is followed by two Appendixes, which contain information about the diagnostic criteria of autism and sample instructional programs, which also include a glossary. Finally, there is an index. The entire book is 371 pages in length. The longest section by far is the story of Anne Marie, but only because this section contains many of the battles for information the Maurice's fought, and the various techniques tried by the family. The story of Michel is simply interjected to show yet another success with similar methods.

Quotes

"Some murky part of my brain, the part that had been brooding over her for months now, knew something that my more lucid thoughts were not admitting: she was slipping away from us, and she was slipping away fast. There was a drumbeat quickening the sound of a truth that needed to be heard. There was a child who was wondering into darkness." Chap. 2, p. 20

"This cry is our old habit of mind. We think we have some control, even as the impassive, impossible truth sits staring malevolently at us. 'Whether you sink or whether you swim, you will deal with me,' whispers the voice of catastrophe. 'Whether you want me or whether you don't, I am here, forever. You are impotent to change me. I will change you.'" Chap. 3, p. 27

"But I felt the anger, and it was eating me up. This godawful thing was turning me into a raging lunatic. I was evil, that's why such evil had befallen me. Only an evil woman could feel rage against her own child." Chap. 5, p. 42

"Suddenly I sat down on the floor, back against the wall. 'That's not Anne-Marie,' I whispered. 'I don't have to love her anymore because that's not Anne-Marie.' I felt cold and angry. There. She negates me; I negate her. I was calm about it, very rational. This is better. This cold indifference is quite a relief. better than walking around like some amputee, hurting to the point of madness. I truly do not have to care anymore about this strange child, because that's not my Anne-Marie." Chap. 5, p. 47

"She continued to look at me, a half-smile on her lips, her eyes wide and alert. Her hand was held out toward the water, her eyes were turned to me, inquisitively. No words could have been more eloquent. Do you see what I see, Mommy? Will you share this beauty with me? I felt as though I had looked into those clear blue eyes and seen, suddenly, unmistakably, hope made real." Chap. 13, p. 112

"As to play, Bridget taught Anne-Marie the same way she was teaching her everything else: by breaking down the activity into small manageable units, then physically assisting her to complete each unit. If they were doing a puzzle, for instance, Bridget first guided her hand to put each piece into the appropriate place, then very gradually backed off as Anne-Marie herself gained understanding. Everything was prompted, physically and verbally. If this sounds contrived and forced, it's because it was. But it was better than watching her endlessly tap puzzle pieces together six inches in front of her eyes." Chap. 15, p. 128

"No matter what I thought I had known about human egotism, the desire for recognition, the desire for fame, I still could not understand why Martha Welch had allowed this distorted view to be broadcast. I don't understand it to this day. I had praised her. I had validated her approach. I still think, in spite of all the anger, that holding therapy did contribute to Anne-Marie's progress. Why wasn't that enough for Dr. Welch? She knew about Bridget's and Robin's work; we had argued about it all the time. How could she

allow anyone - any parent - to believe that one hour a day of holding therapy was going to rescue his child? How could she continue to propagate the "faulty-mothering" theory in one breath and deny it in the next?" Chap. 23, p. 202

"...although behavioral therapy is, broadly speaking, founded on a principle of consistency - subjects have been shown to respond in a consistent manner to particular stimuli and structure - there will always be variation in the range and nature of that response. What works stylistically or substantially for one child might not necessarily work as well for another." Chap. 24, p. 205

"There is a fine line between firmness and harshness, and I suppose everyone defines that line differently. But there are some behavioral therapists whose general attitude goes over that line for me. There are therapists who are unmoved and strong in the face of tantrums, and those who create fear in the child and use intimidation as a first mode of approach. One could say that the ends justify any means, but one can't help but wonder, in some of these cases, if the ends, the results, are really all they could be." Chap. 24, p. 209

"Parental confusion over what is the "right" way of treating kids, either handicapped or normal, goes right back to that old conflict between the psychodynamic and the behavioral modes, both of which are pervasively enmeshed in our culture, and both of which can be carried to an extreme. I have been defending behavioral therapy throughout this book, because the field of autism has been dominated for so long by the most absurd excesses of psychodynamic school of thought, and because many parents of autistic children whom I have met find it very difficult even to try behavioral therapy. But in the larger context, there is a possibility for excess on both sides of the spectrum." Chap. 30, p. 255

"Inside of the autistic child there is a little wounded self: intelligent, whole, aware, able to understand complex language. If the child does not talk, it is because he has chosen not to talk. This 'hidden', normal child 'inside' the autistic child is too afraid and upset to 'come out.' The word 'breakthrough' appears so often in these psychodynamic approaches precisely because of that underlying concept of a whole, healthy child somehow 'buried' or 'imprisoned' in an autistic shell. A child 'coming out of his shell' is a favorite image of this school of thought." Chap. 33, p. 273

"'Don't mourn for us, Catherine,' said another father to me once, when I tried to speak with him of this pain. 'My son hasn't recovered as your children have, but we have joy here too. There is progress that is meaningful. There is a point where the deficits are not devastating, and you do begin to accept.' I am happy he said that to me, but my happiness will always be tinged by the guilt and grief of a survivor, one who knows that others are still there, left behind." Part III, p. 302

Topics for Discussion

Catherine Maurice begins to notice problems with her daughter and immediately begins looking in medical books to discover the problem. Do you think this helped her to pinpoint the issue faster? Do you think it may have biased the diagnosis towards autism? Why or why not?

Catherine uses behavioral therapy to help both her son and daughter recover from autism. First, describe behavioral therapy. Do you think this method is a moral method to use with small children? Why or why not?

Several times in the novel, other therapists suggest Anne Marie and Michel were misdiagnosed, since "there is no recovery from autism". Do you believe this is possible? Why or why not? Be sure to back up your opinion with points from the novel.

Autism causes a variety of behaviors and varies greatly from person to person. Compare and contrast the autism symptoms presented by Anne Marie and Michel in the book. What behaviors were similar? Which were different?

In the book, there are several possible causes given for autism, including neurological, biological, and psychological. Choose which cause you believe is most likely responsible for the disease, and discuss support for your viewpoint, as presented in the novel.

Holding therapy is originally presented in the book as a positive therapy for parents. However, over the course of the novel, Catherine loses her faith in the therapy as she witnesses several episodes of near abuse stemming from this method. Give your opinions of holding therapy, and include them for both the holding therapy that is prescribed by Dr. Welsh and that done by Catherine in the novel. Do you believe either has any merit at all? Why or why not?

The book is severely critical to psychoanalytical theory in terms of autism. Discuss why Catherine is so adamant against such theories, and be sure to use examples from the book. Do you think Catherine is being fair to psychoanalytical theory? Do you think there is any possibility that parents are responsible for autistic behavior? Why or why not?

Catherine gives tips at the end of the novel related to funding for therapy for autistic children. Summarize these points. Do you believe teaching therapies for autistic children should be funded through public education funds? Why or why not?