



Raising Cubby: A Father and Son's Adventures with Asperger's, Trains, Tractors, and High Explosives

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The slyly funny, sweetly moving memoir of an unconventional dad's relationship with his equally offbeat son—complete with fast cars, tall tales, homemade explosives, and a whole lot of fun and trouble

Misfit, truant, delinquent. John Robison was never a model child, and he wasn't a model dad either. Diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at the age of forty, he approached fatherhood as a series of logic puzzles and practical jokes. When his son, Cubby, asked, "Where did I come from?" John said he'd bought him at the Kid Store and that the salesman had cheated him by promising Cubby would "do all chores." He read electrical engineering manuals to Cubby at bedtime. He told Cubby that wizards turned children into stone when they misbehaved.

Still, John got the basics right. He made sure Cubby never drank diesel fuel at the automobile repair shop he owns. And he gave him a life of adventure: By the time Cubby was ten, he'd steered a Coast Guard cutter, driven a freight locomotive, and run an antique Rolls Royce into a fence.

The one thing John couldn't figure out was what to do when school authorities decided that Cubby was dumb and stubborn—the very same thing *he* had been told as a child. Did Cubby have Asperger's too? The answer was unclear. One thing *was* clear, though: By the time he turned seventeen, Cubby had become a brilliant chemist—smart enough to make military-grade explosives and bring state and federal agents calling. Afterward, with Cubby facing up to sixty years in prison, both father and son were forced to take stock of their lives, finally coming to terms with being "on the spectrum" as both a challenge and a unique gift.

By turns tender, suspenseful, and hilarious, this is more than just the story of raising Cubby. It's the story of a father and son who grow up together.

Praise for John Robison's first book, *Look Me In the Eye*:

"Lean, powerful in its descriptive accuracy and engaging in its understated humor...Emotionally gripping."
--*Chicago Tribune*

"A fantastic life story told with grace, humor, and a bracing lack of sentimentality." --*Entertainment Weekly*

"Endearing...Robison is a natural storyteller." --*Boston Globe*

Raising Cubby: A Father and Son's Adventures with Asperger's, Trains, Tractors, and High Explosives Details

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Trina Clarey says

I received this book through Goodreads First Reads Giveaway.

When I entered the draw for this book I wasn't sure if I would read it or just donate it to the local school library if I won. Well, I did win a copy and when I received it in the mail I began reading it. I continued reading it all the way to the end.

Mr. Robison writes in such a way that you feel like you're sitting across from him, drinking coffee and listening as he tells you his story. His style is refreshing and really enjoyable to read.

By telling us about his adventures raising Cubby he teaches us about Asperger's in an informal, non-textbook way that draws us in and touches our hearts. This is not a clinical case study of Asperger's, it's someone's life living with Asperger's.

This book has earned a spot on my bookshelf and I would definitely recommend it others.

Shannon says

I enjoyed Look Me In The Eye: My Life with Asperger's, and won a copy of Raising Cubby through a Goodreads drawing.

Raising Cubby touches on Robison's earlier life, but chiefly focuses on his relationship with his only child. Robison was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (a condition on the autism spectrum) when he was an adult, and as he states, "The gifts and disabilities of Asperger's go hand in hand." His distinct perspective resulted in many one-of-a-kind parent/child experiences, but he is equally open about the social challenges Asperger's brings, and how they affect his family.

Raising Cubby's final 100 pages were especially interesting, and John Robison is establishing himself as a voice and advocate for autism-related awareness. With his frank, straightforward, and often humorous writing style, he is worth following.

Brandy Nightingale says

I'm a big fan of John Elder Robison. Having read his two previous titles, "Look Me In The Eye" and "Be Different" (both in one sitting, mind), I could not wait to read Raising Cubby. From the moment I opened the first page, I was completely engrossed in the story and was saddened to put it down once I had finished. His writing is incredibly descriptive--I feel I know each character personally. And at the risk of sounding a bit creepy, I found myself wishing I had the author as a "Dada", or at least someone like him who'd tried as hard

as he did to successfully raise Cubby (who is an endearing, fascinating character himself, from childhood on). What an incredibly honest, hilarious, breathtaking, heartbreaking, intelligently told story.

Whether you have Asperger's, a child with Asperger's, have children, or no children, I highly recommend this book. It's an adventure. It's a sparkling clean window into the mind of a man who so desperately wants to do his best (who can't relate?). It's a roller coaster of loops, turns, tears, and laughter.

Cheryl says

A father's love for his son

First and foremost in "Raising Cubby," the reader can tell immediately that John Elder Robison loves his son, Cubby, and vice versa.

I loved this tale of Cubby's early life. Robison (the Wondrous Dada) is a master raconteur, keeping his young son (and the reader) entertained with strange and fantastical stories concerning their everyday life.

He also took Cubby on field trips I wish I could have gone on, to railyards, to power stations, to shipyards, to nuclear plants (note that these trips were before 9/11) and the way they got invited in for tours was ingenious.

It was very interesting to me to read this book that is told from the viewpoint of someone with Asperger's. Reading about the differences in thinking was thought provoking.

One of the main stories of the book concerned Cubby's being charged with felony charges concerning making of explosives. It made me grit my teeth and wonder again about the rampant abuse of power in our country.

I recommend this book to anyone with Aspergers or autism or anyone knowing someone on the spectrum or parents or...Well, just anyone who wants to read a delightful book.

Marianne says

I really wanted to like this book, but never really did. It's too much of the same chapter after chapter. Nothing really happens in this book, it's just a father's rambling of life as a parent. I even skipped 4 chapters in the middle and never even noticed the difference.

bookczuk says

If men are from Mars, and women from Venus, then John Elder Robison is from a whole different universe from me. That's not to say I didn't like the book, because I did, or that I didn't think he loved his son and tried his best to be a good father, because he did. Some brains are wired differently, and that difference makes it hard for those individuals to fit into the world where most of us reside. So when you get an intelligent, articulate, and observant man, who has a differently wired brain, telling the story of raising a differently

wired son, someone (such as myself) with mundane wiring in my brain, can only marvel at the alternate viewpoint.

The main thing that jumped out at me, aside from how much Robison loved his boy, is the vast imagination of the man. The stories he told his son were marvelous: getting Cubby from a store that sold kids, rather than that vastly unbelievable "mommy and daddy made you" or "the stork brought you"; how Santa got started, what that stone figure of a child holding a lantern at the end of someone's driveway *really* was. The activities he and his son did together were wonderful, too, and the solution to getting past security guards who wouldn't let him take his son to explore stockyards, energy plants, etc that they wanted to see, was brilliant. It was such a different world view than my own, and so fascinating.

My favorite (as in most heartwarming for me) of the different wiring examples builds on that enormous love element, as well. When young Jack (aka Cubby) was born, Dad became obsessed with the idea that somehow, by accident or intent, the wrong baby would go home with them. So, in the delivery room, moments after fresh baked baby had emerged, he carefully drew a temporary tattoo on the baby's foot with a sharpie, so no one could run off with his son, and foist a changeling on him.

Robison was diagnosed at age 40 with Asperger's; his son was diagnosed shortly after that. The boy's mother also turns out to be on the autistic spectrum, as do several other people who appear in the novel. Finding a way to work in the mainstream world is a struggle and a challenge for such folks. I know people in my own life who also fall in this spectrum, some who have managed more successfully than others, but I do know the hard work it takes. This book not only recounts the story of getting Cubby from babyhood to young adult (with a few minor blow-ups, pun intended, along the way), but it serves to help raise the awareness of those of us with the standard brain wiring of the gifts and challenges "different" folks bring to our world.

Thank you to Blogging for Books and to the publishers for sending me a copy of this book.

Kurtbg says

This book tells the story of a man with asperger's and his son, who also has it. The author turns out to have done some interesting things in his life (restore cars, create pyrotechnics and guitars for KISS in the 70's).

He also liked to engage in elaborate story-telling to his son to explain things with sometimes humorous results. However, many of these evinced winces as they can be seen to go beyond fanciful. Like, explaining how children come from a Kid's store and come with guarantees, or how a stone statue of child on a neighborhood lawn was once real but turned into stone by the wizard occupants of the houses, and more.

The son turned out to have a fancy for chemistry ignited by seeing fireworks in Mexico.

What was more interesting to me was that the story was wrapped around the fact that his son was arrested and tried in western Massachusetts for setting off explosions on his father's land and a landfill with homemade chemicals and posted youtube videos of them. He was tried in a grand jury in what turns out to be a purely political move by a District Attorney to bolster her falling popularity.

Kristim99 says

I actually was planning to give this book to my sister. She is an educator and deals with autistic children daily. Fortunately, before I put it in the mail, I opened it up to take a quick look and was hooked. I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It was amusing and touching, and informative at the same time. My son and husband both want to read it now. As for my sister, she'll get it eventually.

Marie Carlino says

A really interesting read about Asperger's. The first half of the book was a little boring. I wanted to get to the action and explosives already! However the first half of the book provides the context needed to understand the second half of the story. The prologue sets up the court case, however readers don't find out until the end of the book. This was the incentive to stick through the earlier chapters. Some of the things that happened within the 'justice system' in sorting out the case shocked me. How can legal representatives be so ignorant and untruthful under oath? I am just glad that the right verdict was reached in the end. The second half of the book was really good and extremely funny. I laughed out loud many times and would read passages from the book to my family who wanted to know what was so funny.

T.Rob says

John Robison is perhaps best known for his first book *Look Me In The Eye*." It is a great book and it opened my eyes to my own Asperger's. The only issue I have with it is that the book resonates so well that it tends to define the Asperger's experience. For that reason, I highly recommend *"Raising Cubby"* as a companion. It has John's trademark mischievous wit and great storytelling, but it also provides a different glimpse of Asperger's as John tries to understand Cubby through the lens of his own history and then struggles with the differences to his son's experience. Each book stands on its own but as a pair they offer a glimpse of the diversity of Asperger's. If you read *"Look,"* then definitely add *"Cubby"* to your reading list.

Renae says

DNF I won this book as a goodreads giveaway.

Like a few other readers before me, I so wanted to like this book. I'm intrigued by the minds of those with Asperger's But this book drove me nuts. I couldn't even finish it. I can understand that perhaps the author wanted to protect his family by using pseudo names but come on! There are only so many times I can read the words Big Bear, Little Bear, and Cubby. This was a major turn off for me. I wanted to know how the author and his son received their diagnosis and how they as well as he wife/mother dealt with it. This book is a disappointment. No. Just No

TAMMY CUEVAS says

John Elder Robison's life hasn't been typical. Raised in what some might call a dysfunctional family, he spent years wondering why he didn't fit in with others. His slant on life was slightly skewed and he did not fit in the traditional public school. Socially awkward, he had few friends until he met a girl he called Little Bear. Friends for years, their relationship finally turned romantic. After a few years of marriage, she gave birth to their only son, who John nicknamed Cubby. Although many of his quirks were his and his alone, he was similar enough to his parents that it may amaze readers to find that he was not diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome until many years after they were diagnosed.

This is an inspirational story of two parents, themselves "different", who managed to find a way to cope with a world they did not always understand while raising a child who also found the world to be a difficult place. Laugh-out-loud funny at times, it is also a touching tribute to the triumph of the human spirit.

5 stars

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the NetGalley book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Melody says

I really enjoyed Robison's *Look Me In The Eye*, and I hoped I'd enjoy this one just as much. I didn't, though I still found it interesting. The second half of the book picks up speed and interest. Much of the first part is amusing but repetitive. Just like childrearing, yeah. I enjoy being able to look at the world through Robison's eyes, and I'll certainly read the book he alludes to in this text, the one he's writing now.

Diane Yannick says

John Robison is an authentic voice for Aspergers. He's also an authentic voice for human beings who are doing their darndest to navigate the complexities of a world littered with people who lack human compassion. When I read his memoir, *Look Me In The Eye*, I became a fan so of course I had to read about Cubby. I loved sharing this look into the life of a father and son raising each others' awareness of the gifts and challenges of living with Aspergers. If indeed autism is a result of genetic predisposition and environmental influences, this book is important to our understanding. We get a peek into the family dynamics of high functioning autistic parents raising equally high functioning autistic children.

John puts a Sharpie mark on Cubby's foot when he is born just to be certain there are no hospital mess ups. To him, this is a normal precaution that any sensible human being might take. Perhaps it is. When Cubby washes his hands until they are raw, his dad gets it.

As a dad living with Aspergers (not diagnosed until 40) it was still hard for him to see his son's autistic signs.

When Cubby was unable to function in a traditional school, he was sent to a Montessori school that was able to appreciate his gifts. When he developed an obsessive interest in chemistry, his dad was there to teach him. When he was put on trial for creating explosives, his dad sat beside him. Both ATF and the FBI got involved in this trial of prosecutors' egos. It became clear that our court system often seeks a scapegoat to make the public believe that they are safeguarding their safety. Cubby's meticulous attention to details and high intelligence left them without a victim to prosecute. Their disappointment was palpable.

John Robison is a meticulous recorder of family stories. He writes in a straight forward manner never worrying how he is going to come across to the reader. It was this attention to detail that sometimes weighed me down as the reader. The build up and some parts of the trial dragged for me. That said, I love this dad and his son and look forward to more words from both of them.

Janaki Kuruppu says

I wanted to like this book! I love the idea of getting inside the thinking of someone who has suffered with a different way of perceiving the world, and how that difference plays out in living a life.

But I spent the whole book waiting for the revelation about how the author made the discovery of his own Asperger's diagnosis (which he never really does), and he finally devotes one short chapter to his son's diagnosis - without any real comment on how his son accepted the diagnosis, and only minimal explanation of his own reaction.

It's true, as another reader in my book club suggested, the terse and impersonal writing style may provide a view into the mind of a person with Asperger's. but, it didn't seem quite so simple to me.

It seemed more like this author expects me to read his previous books to look for the answers I expected in this book, but I'm unwilling to commit to reading more writing that I found so unsatisfactory. I also thought that the two mentions of his brother's well-known book were a bit gratuitous, and didn't serve the story of the memoir at all.
