

Foreword

It is a common experience across human nature that we like to receive gifts. Big gifts, little gifts, gifts of all kinds and varieties. In the spirit of the joy of experiencing gifts, I want to share my perspectives on two gifts that I treasure.

My first gift is Janice Fialka. Janice is truly a positive force in my life. I have had the good fortune of having Janice as a friend for a very long time. Sometimes I am in more frequent touch with her, and sometimes it may be months between our conversations. Regardless of the frequency of contact or lack thereof, every encounter that I have with Janice I can truly call a gift. I always learn, always laugh, and always feel a sense of solidarity that she is a reliable ally in our shared pursuit of making significant and sustainable enhancements in quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families. Of Janice's many attributes, I especially appreciate her wisdom and nurturing ways.

I am reminded of the proverb that "a tree is known by its fruit." Janice has a truly amazing son, Micah Fialka-Feldman, who has "broken the glass ceiling" when it comes to students with intellectual disabilities attending college and pursuing national advocacy roles. I have had the good fortune of watching Micah's DVDs (www.throughthesamedoor.com) and benefiting from his own wise insights about his journey to an inclusive adult life. I applaud Micah's self-determination and vision in his accomplishments, but I also am well aware of the "partnership tree" that launched Micah into such a successful life. Janice is "known by her fruit."

Although I have not had the privilege of knowing Arlene Feldman and Karen Mikus, I know that if Janice chose to work with them, they share her values and proclivities or trusting partnerships with families. Thus, not only Janice but also Arlene and Karen are gifts not only to me but to you as well.

The second gift is this amazing book. *Parents and Professionals Partnering for Children With Disabilities: A Dance That Matters*, Revised, is transformational in its impact. Yes, it provides a solid basis of information, but it moves beyond information to enable us as readers to examine our immediate reactions to the challenges and opportunities of partnerships, our core beliefs that are tied to our immediate reactions, and our overall frame of reference of how we come to partnerships—whether we are a parent or professional. Thus, your encounter with this book will not just be a “quick read,” but rather an opportunity for self-reflection of assumptions and feelings, identification of priorities for personal change, exploration of potential new ways of forming relationships, opportunity for building competence for new roles, and incorporation of new perspectives into every day actions. Truly, this is the essence of transformation.

Although I really was not aware that the first edition of their book had room for improvement, Janice, Arlene, and Karen have taken this revised edition to a new level with additional family vignettes from both family and professional perspectives as well as extensive new material on the building blocks of partnerships—especially in challenging situations, such as when parents are experiencing anger or appear to be “uninvolved” from the professional’s perspective. This additional material is an added treasure in truly being able to act wisely.

I have every confidence that my two gifts—this author team and this book—will be received by you in a similar way. Consider yourself fortunate to have picked up this book. I can guarantee that you will consider yourself bestowed with partnership treasures when you have embraced the lessons that lie herein. This is indeed your lucky day. You might even consider it your birthday—a birth of new partnerships celebrated with your new gifts.

I encourage you to adhere to one of Janice’s favorite admonitions—“the power of pause.” This book is one in which you owe yourself the chance to pause, savor, and become transformed.

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