



All I Can Handle: I'm No Mother Teresa: A Life Raising Three Daughters with Autism

Kim Stagliano, Jenny McCarthy (Introduction)

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"Dr. Spock? Check. Penelope Ann Leach (remember her?)? Check. What to Expect When You're Expecting? Check. I had a seven hundred dollar Bellini crib for God's sake! I was perfect. And so was Mia when she was born . . ."

...and so begins Kim Stagliano's electrifying and hilarious memoir of her family's journey raising three daughters with autism. In these stories, Stagliano has joined the ranks of David Sedaris and Augusten Burroughs with her amazing ability to lay everything on the table—from family, friends, and enemies to basement floods to birthdays to (possible) heroin addictions—eviscerating and celebrating the absurd. From her love of Howard Stern to her increasing activism in the autism community and exhaustive search for treatments that will help her daughters, she covers it all. Always outspoken, often touching, and sometimes heartbreaking, Kim Stagliano is a powerful new voice in comedic writing—her “Kimoir” (as she calls it) will be a must-read within the autism community and the literary world at large.

All I Can Handle: I'm No Mother Teresa: A Life Raising Three Daughters with Autism Details

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From Reader Review All I Can Handle: I'm No Mother Teresa: A Life Raising Three Daughters with Autism for online ebook

Debbie says

I appreciate how tough it must be to write a book caring for three daughters with autism. However this book was written, edited and organized poorly. There were typos, and information and chapters not arranged in a well thought out manner. It was at times reading a series of thoughts or experiences linked togwther rather than a complete book that led from one point to another. I was hoping the book would be funny but it wasn't.

Even with my disappointment in how the book was written, I still thought it was interesting. I've read other books about autism and didn't feel the other ones gave me as much a picture as this one did as to what it would be like to raise an autistic child. This book was so real and talked about many experiences describing it in a way that you can picture what it would have been like to be there. It also gives you a different view of how complex autism is since this author has the rare experience of parenting three children with autism all with varying degrees of affliction. I admire this author for her passion.

Kristen says

I can't imagine having one kid with autism, let alone 3 girls with it. This book started off as an insiders look at what raising special needs kids, specially those with autism, really means. It was sad, funny and had a very casual-talking-with-a-friend type of tone. The last third of the book, however, seemed to take a turn in tone and when it started to explore the author's somewhat controversial views on autism, I got a little turned off. I understand that she is passionate about the topic, and clearly she has been beaten down and vilified for her views online and elsewhere, but the agressive tone did take me aback somewhat.

I'm glad that I read the paperback version since it included more information about the ending - which felt very vague and unsatisfying at first.

In summary: This was a book I read for a Wayzata staff book discussion. I'm glad I read it, but I didn't love all of it. I don't feel informed enough to agree or disagree with some of her more contentious points, but they are probably good food for thought in the future. Kim Stagliano is a fighter for her kids and while I hope it's a fight that I don't have to fight, I'm glad she cares about her kids that much.

Marcela says

Maybe I've just read too many memoirs by accomplished authors, but I was disappointed by this book. I felt like I was reading through the author's scattered thoughts in a journal, not a \$24.95 hardcover book.

I didn't see the quality of writing of David Sedaris or Augusten Burroughs that some reviewers mentioned. I found the book messy and redundant, even when most chapters seemed incomplete.

Kudos to the family for keeping it together and thriving, thanks to the author for her courage to share her story and fight for her kids.

Elizabeth says

I just was really disappointed by this book. There was no narrative and yet her information seems crazed and all over the place. She both undershares and overshares. No one is likeable or relatable.

Her position that there is an epidemic is intriguing and worth talking about. But her use of just not remembering autistic kids so they weren't there in the past is so absurd it makes me angry. Society used to lock these kids away. Some of them were killed. You don't remember them because the very difficult struggle your family is taking would have been impossible a generation or two ago.

Sonia says

So I *almost* didn't read this book because Jenny McCarthy wrote the foreword, but I'm glad I did. Ms. Stagliano has a way with words and is an engaging storyteller. Despite the subject matter, there were times where I forgot I was reading about a woman struggling to raise three daughters with autism and instead thought I was reading a page out of Good Fellas. Her prose and vernacular is just so North Eastern she, quite figuratively, transported me to Boston.

I also really liked how she kept it 100 talking about the struggles of raising three girls on the spectrum. She didn't sugar coat it, and in fact, spoke out about those who do gloss over the dirty details of life. Her love for her daughters, and her protectiveness over them come shining through.

So why 3 stars and not 5? Because her POV, laid on quite heavily at times, can be overbearing and overwhelming for someone who doesn't agree with her. I wouldn't say she's pushy about being an anti-vaxxer. And, in fact, does not consider herself to be one. And yet, there is a tone to her book that strongly implies that no rational person who reads the literature could possibly be okay with vaccinations and/or the vaccination schedule pushed by pediatricians. She's also incredibly dismissive of pediatricians themselves and places a lot of blame on them for not having the amount of knowledge she believes they should have about autism and early intervention. She's very opinionated about science, research, doctors, big pharma, etc. And who's to pass judgment on that? She is raising 3 girls with autism. Still, some chapters were a little too preachy to get through and I couldn't wait to get through the sermon so that I could hear more delightfully told tales about her life.

Blair says

Kim Stagliano is definitely a passionate mom who has a lot to say. I was intrigued when I heard about her book, All I Can Handle: I'm No Mother Teresa: A Life Raising Three Daughters With Autism. I am a mother myself, but have no personal experience with autism. I have several friends who have children with autism and I was interested in a deeper look into an autism mom's daily life.

Alas, this book is not what I hoped it would be. I think that Stagliano's scope was larger than I expected it would be. I also think that Stagliano is a good writer whose piece would have benefited from further revision and editing. There were way too many details and asides that detracted from rather than enhanced her

storytelling. For example, I could have done without most of the descriptors of her husband's careers and the specifics of his job losses. Just knowing they were struggling with unemployment would have been enough. Also, I can appreciate the author's humorous tone, but felt like she was trying too hard at times.

The topic of the book was compelling and the work itself was readable; I sped right through it. Certain sections would have been great blog entries. The reprint of the "crapisode" essay was great. I just finished the book feeling unsatisfied. There are quite a few memoirs being published right now, and this is a case where the publisher should have been held to a greater standard. The raw material was good, but this book needed work.

Chris says

I was very disappointed by this book. When I read the jacket, I thought it would be a really interesting book about the day to day challenges of raising three girls with autism. We get way too little of that, and way too much ranting about the evil pharmaceutical companies, the clueless doctors and anyone who dares to disagree with her. I wanted more about her daughters and how they make it all work. Or try to. It made for a very broad and unfocused book. A smaller scope would have really helped. And a good editor. I have a feeling this woman is exhausting to be around.

Tiffany says

Oh, where to begin... this review is guaranteed to be long, so I apologize ahead of time.

First of all, I can not imagine what it is like to have three children with Autism. I would not be able to handle that. It is obviously a very, very stressful life. I do, however, have a special needs son with some similar traits to Autism so I am not completely unaware of the life.

That being said, I just could not get into this book. When I first read about it, I could not wait to read it. I understand the stresses of having a child with special needs and all the extra work and understanding that you have to put into parenthood. It is not easy, I know that for a fact. The reviews promised a serious matter with a comedic tone. I'm sorry, but I didn't find her very funny. Yes, she made light of her situation and tried throwing in some witty analogies here and there. I found them annoying. I don't know what it is, I just couldn't get into it.

In part of the book, Kim dedicates a page as "Sex Time" and writes a short paragraph about finding time for she and the husband to have adult time alone. She is debating on writing this chapter and at the end says "I can write this chapter. Turn the page." Now, the following page is blank, so either she couldn't go through with it and made a bad joke, or she is referring to the next chapter, which is what I assumed. Now, assuming she is talking about the next chapter, I was expecting something else along the lines of how it is possible to still find time with your spouse when you have three autistic children demanding all of your time. And I guess I was expecting a little private details too, the way she was hyping it up. But when you turn the page, you find the next chapter, which is about Howard Stern. I'm sorry, but millions of people like Howard Stern. Just because you are some lonely housewife in the suburbs does not mean you have to keep it a big, dirty secret. That is pretty much how she describes it. Once again, pretty annoying.

The next issue I have with the author, is the husband's seemingly lacking interest in helping her with the children and her just letting it be. After years of him taking off to play golf and not being around to help when she most needs it, she finally breaks and yells at him. I'm sorry, but if during the week of our wedding and my husband is playing golf everyday and not helping me with preparations and leaving me to do it alone, I wouldn't take that as a good sign. And I am also pretty sure I wouldn't let him go play golf just because he told his brother he would if my child was having seizures all day. I think I would demand he stay and help with that and the other two children who also need constant attention. But no, she doesn't put her foot down and stand up for herself. But then through the book, she can talk about her and her husband's feel of "Catholic Guilt" or "Catholic sense of duty to each other" Why does having guilt about stealing from a store have to be because you are Catholic, or why does wanting to honor your marriage by staying together and working things out have to be because you are Catholic? Can you not be a good person and feel guilty about something or want to be there for your spouse without being Catholic? Ugh.

There are also a lot of mistakes in this book. Mostly just a few typos here and there, but in one of the chapters Kim describes a neighbor, Matt, talking to his autistic son. But then a few paragraphs later he is referred to as Mike. I didn't catch it at first, but then she goes on to talk about Mike's wife, and I couldn't figure out who Mike was. Then I realized the mistake. It was pretty confusing at first. Also, Kim also repeats the same information several times. She talks several times about vaccines being exempt from medical liability, without offering any new information each time. It is very redundant. This happens a few times with different subjects.

Overall, I am very disappointed with this book. I could definitely relate to the subject matter, but I just could not connect with the author no matter how much I wanted to.

Mercurybard says

This book, frankly, was a mess. I'd expected it to be about more, you know, raising her daughters. There were several points (like when she mentioned the doctor's visit that led them to trying GFCF diets and Mia's "white diet") that I went "ooh, I want to know more about that", but instead it veered off to talk about her marriage or her and her husband's money troubles. There was no clear flow between chapters and even between sections within chapters.

Definitely going in the next bag to half price.

Sherry says

This woman has gigantic balls. She's been criticized right and left for her opinions on the vaccine companies, belief that autism can be cured and for speaking out about just how hard and crappy it can be to raise 3 girls with autism. What an amazing person to stick so hard to her beliefs, to do her research -- in depth research -- about the effects of vaccines on our children and to not just throw up her hands and accept her "fate". No matter how you feel about the autism/vaccine connection, I can PROMISE you this book will make you think. Also, she's pretty darn funny!

Rose says

My worldview is vastly different from the author's, and she certainly kept me shaking my head in disbelief, yet I found her outlook on life quite admirable. Though she is skewered for her views on vaccines, it gives one food for thought.

Suzette says

In writing All I Can Handle, Kim Stagliano does something that feels amazing - she makes me feel like someone else truly understands what I face as the parent of two autistic boys. Her very frank writing about the realities of raising autistic girls puts into words things that my husband and I go through constantly ("Having a child with autism is like a giant game of chess. You need to think several moves ahead to ward off potential problems.") I'm very tempted to give this book to several members of my family to give them a peek into what we are dealing with.

However, the book does feel like two different books in one. It is clear from her writing that Kim feels that there is a strong link between vaccinations and autism. She spends several chapters on this topic. While I fully respect her position, I was more interested in this book for her personal stories and observations. If I want a book about the potential link between autism and vaccinations, there are many others to choose from.

Great book!!!

Emilie says

The first third of this book was wonderful. Interesting, funny, informative. As I read I thought of an unfavorable review I had seen here and thought to myself, "That reviewer is nuts! This book is great!". I found the author very likable and a talented writer. And then I continued to read.

I am all for hearing people express opinions, even strong ones, whether or not I agree with those opinions. I like someone who feels passionately about something enough to vocalize just how strongly they feel. However, in the chapters where the author addresses her views on varying causes and responses to Autism she just rants. I would have responded really positively to a clear and concise statement on why she disagreed with others' points of view on both the diagnosis and treatment of Autism. But she is neither clear nor concise. She just interjects a ridiculous amount of phrases like "What?!" "Are you kidding me?!" and "Hello?!" after stating another's opinion which differs from her own. Followed by some counter point or quote and ended with a very annoying restatement of differing view point and an "I don't think so!". This is where her otherwise well executed writing becomes completely derailed. And, unfortunately, you start to not only discredit her own opinions based on these sudden rants, but also begin to dislike her.

As your dislike of her grows and grows so does your complete amazement and disgust at her husband's actions. She spends a fair amount of time lauding her marriage and how great it is. Then describes her spouse

losing job after job (not even a crashed economy can account for the sheer amount of firings this man went through in a short span of time) and heading to 8 hour sessions of golf while she stays at home and cares for three daughters with autism and her subsequent blow-ups at her husband when he returns home (or when she drags him away from the golf course...literally).

Her words which once rang true to you now seem contradictory, false and whiny. An unfortunate end to a very promising start. Oh, and I forgot to mention the dozens, yes dozens, of spelling, grammar and typo mistakes. The editor's fault, but annoying none the less.

Rachel Dyer says

I generally love memoirs, and I think that Ms. Stagliano has had enough life experiences and insights to write a good one, but this wasn't it. I desperately wanted to like this book, but it was in dire need of a good editor. The mistakes were so numerous and so juvenile that I wonder if Ms. Stagliano took the time to read her own book, or if she accidentally submitted her rough draft, and the publishing editor was clearly asleep on the job. Mistakes included the lack of capitalization of the word "I" twice in the same sentence (pg 42), naming the wrong daughter in a story (i.e. - "I threw on jeans and a T-shirt and together with Mark got Bella, whimpering, into her car seat. He went back into the house to stay with Mia and Bella as I drove . . . (pg 64), writing "Kart" instead of "Karl," failing to capitalize the name "Sarge,(pg 181)" and more. The use and misuse of commas was tragic. These elementary errors were incredibly distracting.

Additionally, The book was written like a series of blog posts with no overall arc or logical sequence. Points were repeated ad nauseum, and the lack of coherency caused the novel to feel like a ride on the Tilt-a-Whirl. By the time the reader gained their bearings, Ms. Stagliano had flitted off to another topic.

The book cover and description are misleading as well. If you are looking for stories about raising children with Autism, there are staggeringly few in this book. The author spent more time bashing her physical appearance than she did relating antecdotes from raising her daughters. She also spent the majority of the book on the soapbox. If the author wishes to write an opinion piece about the epidemic of Autism and her suspicions of the vaccine industry, that is well within her rights, but such a book would be wrongly categorized as a biography/memoir.

The bottom line is that if you want to feel like a ping-pong ball, bounced frenetically around between Ms. Stagliano's life experiences (some of which are related to Autism), opinions, and insecurities, peppered with antecdotes about raising three daughters with Autism and liberally salted with grammatical errors, this book is for you. If, like me, you find this prospect dizzying, you may wish to choose another book.

sue kozin says

Kim Stagliano has all she can handle. With three autistic girls she holds no bars in telling you how it is. Having worked with autistic children in the past, Kim uses humor and exasperation. Kim takes us through several moves, her husband losing and gaining job after job. Trouble getting and keeping the girls in school. Worrying about the future. Worrying about the future of her children.

