

# An essential new toolbox for vulnerable families

## Foreword by Rosa Monckton

In her powerful Foreword to *The Special Parent's Handbook*, Rosa Monckton, the passionate disability campaigner and herself a parent of a daughter with Down's Syndrome, says it all:

***"The Special Parent's Handbook is an important book to have written, and will be a lifeline to any parent of a disabled child. However, it should also be read by any professionals who have anything to do with people who have a disability. Yvonne has written a story of our time."***

With this book, written shortly after her own diagnosis of incurable Stage IV breast cancer, Yvonne Newbold has written the book she wished someone had given her when her own three children were small, and one by one, they were each diagnosed with disabilities. Additionally, one of her children was also diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition which meant he spent two-thirds of his first six years fighting for his life in hospital, where Yvonne always stayed on the ward right by his bedside, sometimes for months on end.

She knows how lost, frightened and isolated parents feel when faced with every parent's nightmare, and in this book she has given parents everywhere a toolbox of tips, tricks and strategies to help them navigate their way through this distressing new world of things they always thought only happened to other people. Although written essentially for parents, any professionals working with these children should also read this book to gain an invaluable insight into how very difficult things are for these families.

*The Special Parent's Handbook* has chapters on getting through the initial shock and bewilderment, how to keep relationships intact when the family landscape has irrevocably changed, how to cope with the endless stream of health and social care professionals trampling over any last vestiges of privacy or dignity, and how to ensure parents don't get crushed by the endless, mindless meetings that will so often inevitably begin to dominate family life. Other parts of the book look at how to cope when your child is seriously ill in hospital, how to get the best for your child from the education system, and making sure your other children don't take second place. There are even chapters on coping with two very common areas of stress within these families; how to best support a child who is in the middle of a meltdown and what to do if they develop food issues. Virtually every aspect of family life in the shadow of disability and illness is covered at length.

The book is never preachy or prescriptive, and it's very well written in a chatty, conversational tone. It's sometimes painfully honest and raw but often very funny too in places.

There has never been a book quite like this one, a parenting manual for any parent who has a child who isn't quite like everybody else's children, written by a parent who has earned her stripes the hard way. It's hands-on, practical advice based on real-life strategies Yvonne developed at home as she stumbled from one crisis to the next, fire-fighting all the way.

It's all the things that the health, education and social care professionals never tell you, probably because they simply don't understand exactly what it's like to deal with the relentlessness of round the clock care day after day, week after week, when you've been running on empty for so long you can barely function.

Inevitably, it's partly a story of Yvonne's family, partly a self-help guide, and partly a commentary on how the public services, charged with the welfare of these vulnerable families, so often make things much worse instead, by piling on a load of extra work, stress and heart-ache. Putting all these elements together Yvonne Newbold has created an extraordinarily powerful book, essential reading not just for these families and those who work with them, but for anyone with an ounce of care, compassion or humanity. Rosa Monckton was right; this is indeed a story of our time.

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### **Yvonne Newbold's Contact Details**

<b>Tel:</b>	<b>020 8647 8434 / 07977 934605</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<b>yvonne@yvonnenewbold.com</b>
<b>Website:</b>	<b>www.yvonnenewbold.com</b>
<b>FB Page:</b>	<b>The Special Parent's Handbook</b>
<b>Twitter:</b>	<b>Yvonne Newbold @SpParentsHbook</b>
<b>Amazon url:</b>	<b><a href="http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1910202231">http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1910202231</a></b>