



### Interview with Susan Rosano, Featured SpecialMom

Welcome to the interview of our Featured SpecialMom Susan Rosano. Susan is a Registered Expressive Arts Specialist, Clinical Pastoral Counselor and Reiki Master. She has three sons; her youngest was a child with special needs who passed away last year of heart failure. Christian was the inspiration for her book "Living the Gift."

**Marla:** *Susan, how will the information in your new book empower families of children with special needs?*

**Susan:** My book will bring awareness to families of children with special needs of the common difficulties that are experienced by many. Aside from bringing awareness, it brings inspiration to work through those difficulties and to grow, move on and have a happy family life.

For those of who feel they are living on an island with too many troubles, the book will let them know that many of us have these same problems that come in many different shapes and forms, and that there are people out there who can help.

My hope also is that my personal stories will be inspiring to people who read them. They are stories that illustrate each dilemma or difficulty and then show how I was able to rise above and move on with new understandings that came to be through my experiences.

The exercises at the end of Chapters 4 – 11 will be very helpful for families to work out their emotions and find new ways to deal with their individual problems.

**Marla:** *Sounds interesting, what are some common dilemmas of families raising children with special needs?*

**Susan:** There is the "Common Dilemma of the Unexpected Future": We don't know where we are headed" when we suddenly have a child with special needs.

There is "The Dilemma of Uncertainty": There is something wrong with our child" – not all that is abnormal is evident right away. We wait for answers for a long time.

There is the "The Dilemma of Being Understood": We have to explain everything" to our families, friends, strangers in the store, professionals of all sorts....it gets tiring.

"The Dilemma of Balance": We have increased demands on our family" Demands that take up relationship time for parents, time from other children, time from our personal mental and physical health needs.

**Marla:** *So Susan, how many dilemmas do you talk about in your book?*

**Susan:** I talk about 8 common dilemmas. Here's the other four:

**"The Dilemma of Normalcy:** We are not a 'typical' family" What is a typical family? How do we redefine that for ourselves?

**"The Dilemma of Personal Space** – We have NO privacy" Between early intervention programs, aides, babysitters and nurses all coming into our house, there is no sacred family privacy.

**"The Dilemma of Comparison** – Our child is not like other children" Even the doctors compare our children to typical kids because they don't know any better.

And the last one in my book is **"The Dilemma of Empowerment** – We are feeling victimized by the circumstances" Are we really victims in all this difficulty or can we be the ones running the show without guilt or judgment from others?

**Marla:** *I can definitely relate to all of them. What is meant by "Living the Gift?"*

**Susan:** Well, the "Gift" is love of course, and our children with special needs live that every day. I believe that is what they are here for – to give love to many people; as many as they come in contact with each and every day. They give their love to everyone in their own special way. We as parents need to understand this because we are "Living the Gift" right along with our children, without even knowing it. We are the facilitators of their love and messages of love to the world.

**Marla:** *I like how you view special needs moms as facilitators. We carry many hats, but we are definitely blessed. How can parents move beyond grief after the birth of a child with special needs?*

**Susan:** First of all, understanding that grief is what we feel at first is very important. If we understand that, then we can move beyond it. Attending to and noticing our own grieving process is important. It helps to approach grief as a series of tasks or feelings to work through. My list of things to be worked through are:

- Shock
- Disbelief
- Bargaining
- Anger
- Denial
- Despair and Depression
- Acceptance and Adjustment. Acceptance always helps with adjustment. I think if you work through all the other things, like depression and denial, it's so much easier to adjust and accept.

**Marla:** *I like how you break it down into different tasks. I know all these can take time to work through if a mom can even get through them all. I know it took me a few days to get through all of them, and am still working on adjustment. I think that's something we will have to work on every day, as there is always something new to "adjust" to.*

**Marla:** *Do you feel it's harder for the fathers to work through all these steps?*

**Susan:** Yes, I think it's harder for Dad's to work through most things when it comes to their child with special needs. They are much more prone to denial.

***Marla:*** I have to agree with you not knocking Dad's but I really believe in my heart my husband definitely is trying to cope. He's a great father, but has a difficult time understanding that things will be different for our little guy. As best as we try we will always run into some obstacle.

**Susan:** I think the way Mommies love their children is different than the way Daddies do. Kids need both ways to make their life complete. Sometimes we Moms think we know everything that's right for our kids and we poo poo what Dads do. But our kids always need both. The "guy" treatment is good for all children no matter what because it is the way Dad's show their love.

***So what do you feel the contributions to society are of a child with special needs?***

**Susan:** Children with special needs are born into this world for a reason. They inspire us all to learn how to live with unusual circumstances and still be happy. They show us unconditional love, support us in funny ways and inspire most people they come in contact with. They have tremendous social value in our communities and are an important part of student life in our school systems. They teach other children to be understanding, empathetic, to have courage and be all inclusive of others unlike themselves. Here is a short list of many things my son taught me and his community: unconditional love, to live in the moment, to have a good sense of humor and to love all people. I think he should have been a politician – at least be a teacher to them. Our world would be a much better place for everyone and everything.

***Marla:*** Very true.

***Marla:*** Thank you Susan for your time, and her book is “Living the Gift”, which can be found at her website: [www.newenglandexpressivearts.com](http://www.newenglandexpressivearts.com)

Interview by Marla Murasko, President and Founder of SpecialMoms Entrepreneur Club (<http://specialmomprenurs.com>). If you are interested in becoming a member of SpecialMoms, please check out our website, or if you would like to be our next Featured SpecialMom you may find that information out on our website.