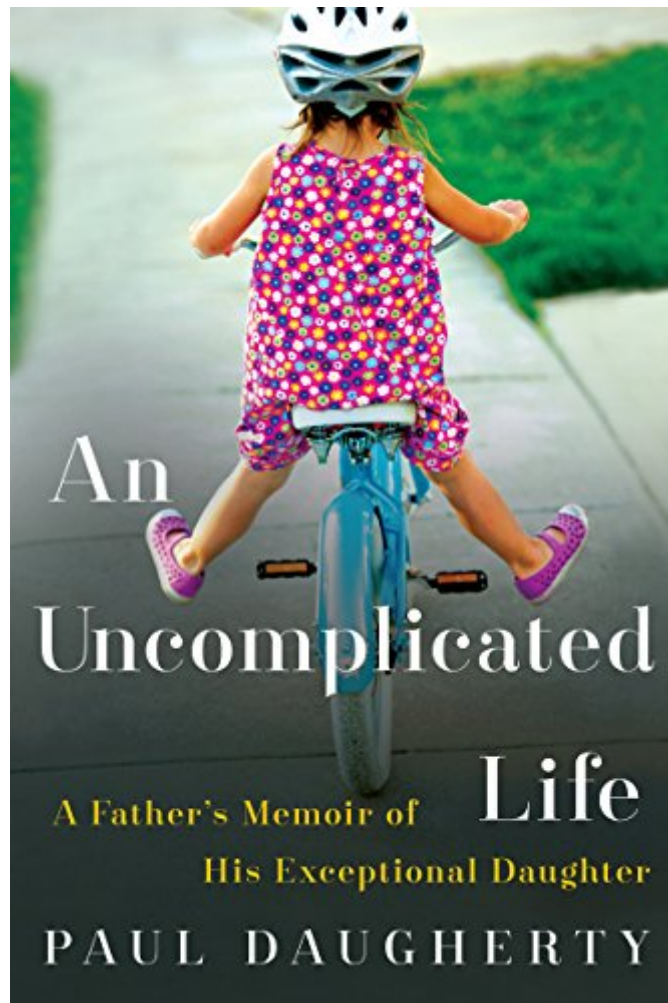


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An Uncomplicated Life: A Father's Memoir Of His Exceptional Daughter



Synopsis

A father's exhilarating and funny love letter to his daughter with Down syndrome whose vibrant and infectious approach to life has something to teach all of us about how we can better live our own. Jillian Daugherty was born with Down syndrome. The day they brought her home from the hospital, her parents, Paul and Kerry, were flooded with worry and uncertainty, but also overwhelming love, which they channeled to the job of building the better Jillian. While their daughter had special needs, they refused to allow her to grow up needy. "Expect, Don't Accept" became their mantra. Little did they know how ready Jillian was to meet their challenge. Paul tells stories from Jillian's mischievous childhood and moves to her early adulthood, tracing her journey to find happiness and purpose in her adult life, sharing endearing anecdotes as well as stories about her inspiring triumphs. Having graduated from high school and college, Jillian now works to support herself, and has met the love of her life and her husband-to-be, Ryan. In *An Uncomplicated Life*, the parent learns as much about life from the child as the child does from the parent. Through her unmitigated love for others, her sparkling charisma, and her boundless capacity for joy, Jillian has inspired those around her to live better and more fully. The day Jillian was born, Paul says, was the last bad day. As he lovingly writes, "Jillian is a soul map of our best intentions" a model of grace, boundless joy, and love for all of us.

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Customer Reviews

Sportswriter Paul Daugherty had a few choice words for God when he learned that his daughter Jillian had Down syndrome. But he writes that the day of her birth "was the last bad day." In *An Uncomplicated Life: A Father's Memoir of His Exceptional Daughter*, Daugherty writes about Jillian and his family's life together, living with a disability. Daugherty's story is raw and personal, revealing the struggles that his family went through in Jillian's education and upbringing. Yet above all he conveys a sense of hope and joy as Jillian's personality and cheerful attitude shine through. Paul and his wife determined from the start that they wanted more for Jillian than the expectations of medical and educational professionals. For too long, parents "had been told their kids with special needs could not achieve." The Daughertys threw out that advice, educated themselves about laws regarding the education of special needs children, and fought for Jillian to be educated in a mainstream classroom. I loved these chapters, as my family has been through the same trials: witnessing the horror of the self-contained classroom, convincing teachers that modification doesn't just mean crossing out a few questions, bringing legal pressure to bear on the district to simply follow the law. Daugherty writes, "No parents of typical kids have to fight their school district for the right to have their children in a typical classroom." Why is inclusion such an important issue to parents of children with special needs? First of all, it's the law. But more importantly, "If you want kids with disabilities to achieve beyond the norm, why would you put them in a segregated classroom, only with other kids with disabilities?"

"*An Uncomplicated Life: A Father's Memoir of His Exceptional Daughter*" (2015 publication; 384 pages) is the long-awaited memoir from Cincinnati Enquirer sport columnist Paul Daugherty regarding "Jillian the Magnificent", a/k/a Jillian, his now 25 yr. old daughter, who has built an "uncomplicated" life while dealing with Down syndrome. In the book's introduction, Paul Daugherty observes that "Three years after starting this project, this is what I will take from it. We're only as good as the way we treat each other", and that is THE recurring theme in this book. Be kind and nice to the people around you. Love them, and they will love you back. The first chapter of the book, in which Paul and his wife Kerry welcome Jillian into the world, and encounter shock when they find

out she has Down syndrome, finishes with this sentence: "Jillian was born October 17, 1989. It was the last bad day", and this goes to another recurring theme in the book: be positive, even in difficult circumstances, and positive things will happen. You make of life what you want from it. Along the way, Paul introduces us to a number of people who proved to be instrumental in making Jillian become what she is now (other than immediate family of course). A sizable portion of the book is devoted to the Daughertys' struggle to have Jillian enrolled in school with the rest of the 'typical' students. Let's just say that Daugherty minces no words for the Loveland (in suburban Cincinnati) School District. "It's the law", the Daughertys keep telling the school. "Jillian's teachers did what was easiest, not what was right. Least resistance was the preferred path. They took advantage of our trust. They stunted Jillian's education. They did it for a few years.

• An Uncomplicated Life: A Father's Memoir of His Exceptional Daughter • is pure love expressed from deep inside a girl born with Down syndrome through her father, the book's author. Jillian Daugherty's spirit is cultivated by her remarkable parents, Paul and Kerry, from her very first breath. Her brother Kelly, extended family members and a handful of focused and dedicated teachers and friends add to Jillian's successful worldview. The book is many things – a tragedy that rights itself, an uncomfortable truth-telling, a documentation of celebrated milestones always preceded by many steps backwards, a chronology of souls evolving, a love story, actually many love stories, a collection of inspirational moments sure to shift your thinking, a thoughtful perspective on the gifts of a 47th chromosome, and a book for which I grieved upon finishing the last page. I wanted more. I still want more. I hope Paul writes another book about Jillian and her soon-to-be husband Ryan as they make their way in the world – touching others' hearts with very little ego involved. This book will remind you that when one's spirit flows freely anything is possible! Jillian and Ryan are teachers for the rest of us who work hard at being conscious human beings. They don't really have to work at it – it's who they are. They live in the moment, seeing the best in others, loving their day-to-day enthusiastically. What's not to love about that inherent medicine. I cherish good writing. When I find someone who expresses what's underway inside his heart and mind in a way that throws coffee through my nose or has me grabbing for a tissue, he's a keeper. Paul couples words and notions with a sliver of surprise.

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