

## **Book club questions for *It's Hard Being You***

1. If you got the chance to ask the author one question, what would it be?
2. How do you think Jessica and the challenges she faced influenced the lives of her siblings?
3. What do you think of the book's title? How does it relate to the book's contents? If you were to write a memoir, what would your title be?
4. The author makes continual references to a person's impact on "the world." How do you think this consciousness influenced her children and closest friends? How does this sensibility compare to your own life and how you were raised and how you raise your own children or relate to those closest to you?
5. How did this book impact you? Which scene has stuck with you the most?
6. How have you been impacted by a person with disability? What do you learn about yourself through people whose lives are significantly different from your own?
7. The author is a fierce advocate for inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classroom. Do you have any experience – as teacher, parent, or student – from which you might agree or disagree? Pros and cons?
8. Did your opinion of the book change as you read it? If so, how? What section(s) of the book do you think would have been the most difficult to write? Why?
9. What were your reactions to the choices Jan made? Specifically, what are your impressions of Carlos Castaneda and his notions of what the author calls "alternate dimensions?"
10. Discuss the book's structure; why do you think the author chose to alternate chapters with the "Healing Dreams/Inner Voices"?
11. Although the author decries the stereotypical notion of a person with a disability as being "brave," there is little question that courage in the face of hurdles large and small is a major theme of the book. How is bravery demonstrated by the members of Sharon's family?
12. The author believes "that the good things that come your way – professionally and personally – are the result of not only hard work but luck." Do you agree? Can you give examples in your life to either support or contradict this idea?
13. Do you think that the years of helping Jessica cope with the frustrations she faced

could have given the rest of the family emotional skills that helped in the aftermath of losing her?

14. The sunflower blooming on the Lake Huron beach seems to be a sign from Jessica. Have you ever experienced a similar "sign" from someone who died?
15. There are numerous standout phrases through the book. They include: ". . . silence is the oxygen for communication" (page 75), ". . . the Temporarily Non-Grieving" (page 203), and "If you survive it, suffering binds people together in a way that happiness simply does not" (page 213). What are some of your favorites?
16. The author is very frank in discussing her stuttering. Did she shed light on how YOU might interact with people of varying disabilities?
17. Are you prepared to be an organ donor?