

## *Ray & Kelly Morris*

**Married since 1986**

**Parents of two sons – oldest diagnosed with a rare brain disorder and profound disabilities**

**Ray Morris, Retired Firefighter/Engineer; Founder of D4SK**

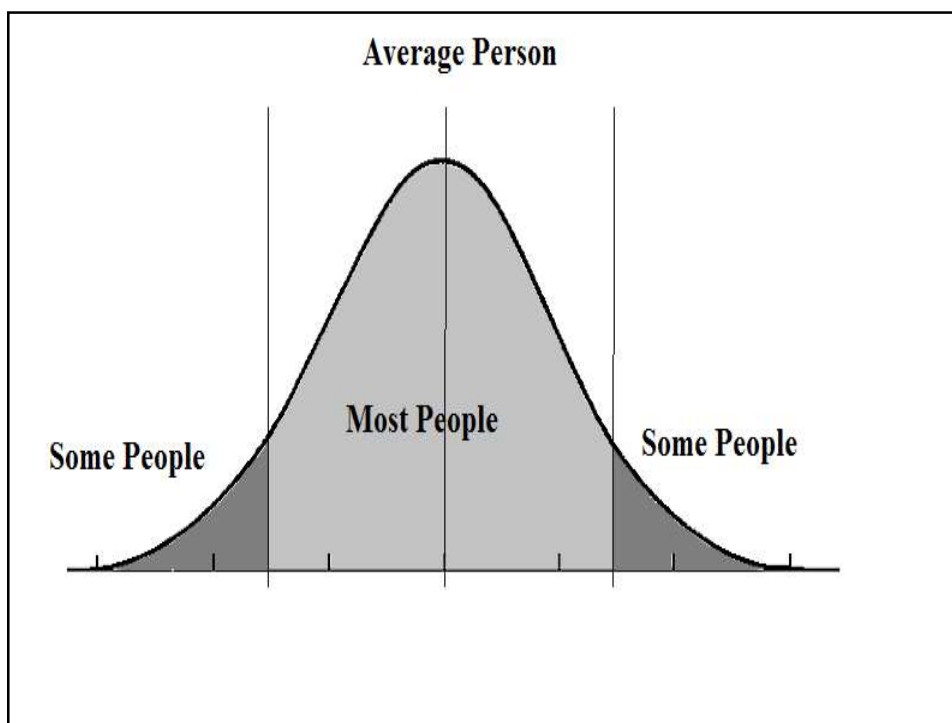
**Kelly Morris, MAPC, LAC – Licensed Psychotherapist for state of AZ, specializing in Marriage Counseling for couples with children who have special healthcare needs**



## OUR COMMONALITY

**What I have found with parents is that the number one emotion when dealing with their child is that they feel **POWERLESS** to the diagnosis.**

**This is the one thing we cannot change...we cannot take away what has happened to our child. This feeling, in general, is constantly in the back of our minds...it effects every decision we make, and exacerbates our feelings, emotions, and reactions.**





## Perspectives/Emotions/Reactions

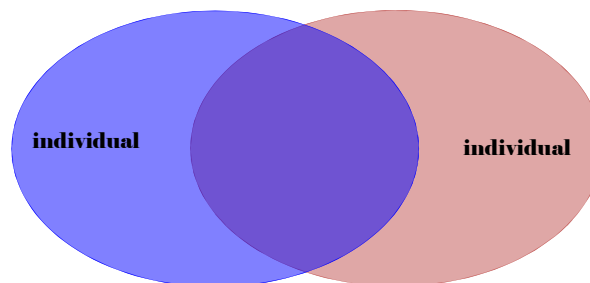
- Yours are not your partners
- The depth is not measurable
- Neither is right nor wrong
- Parents parent differently

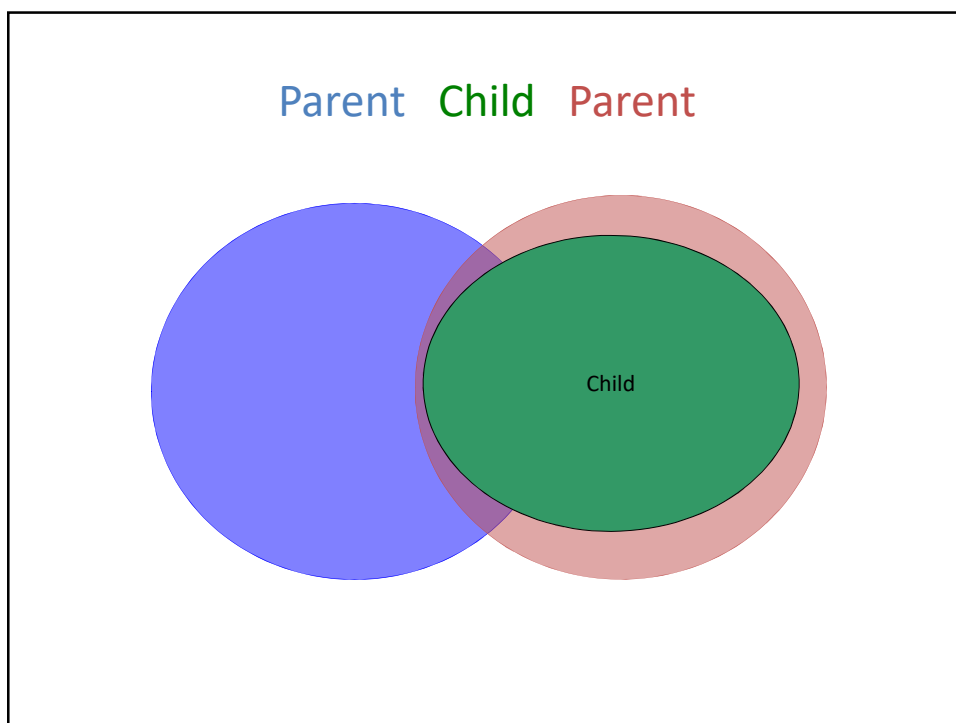
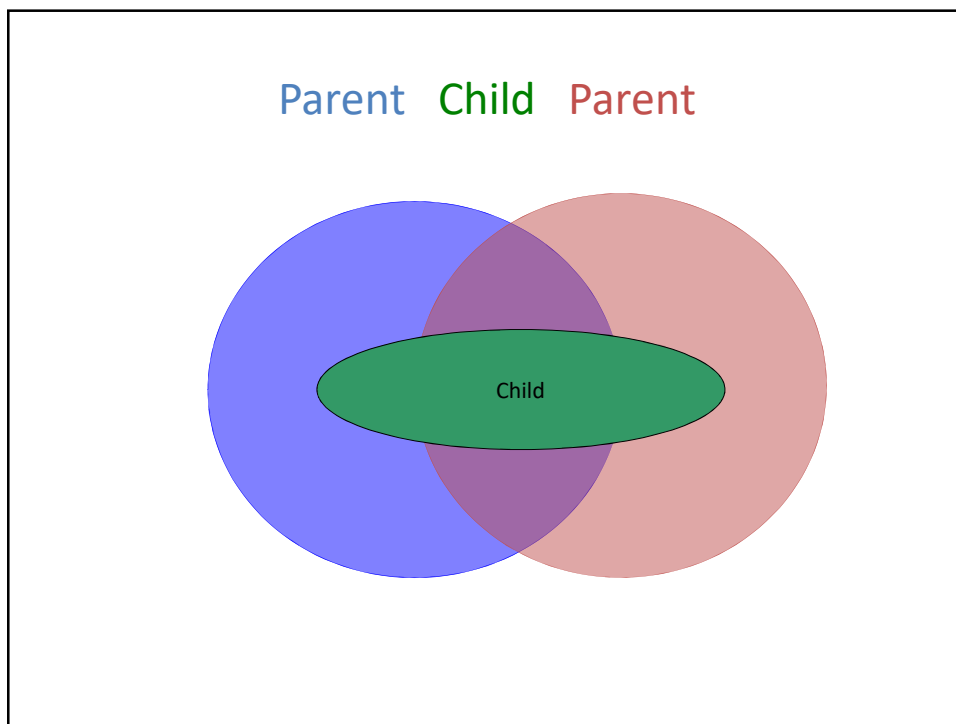
## What did you get from your family of origin?

- Highly stressful events commonly cause individuals to return to how their own family responded emotionally to stress.
- In your own family, how did your parent(s) respond to stress; grief; anger; fear; etc.?



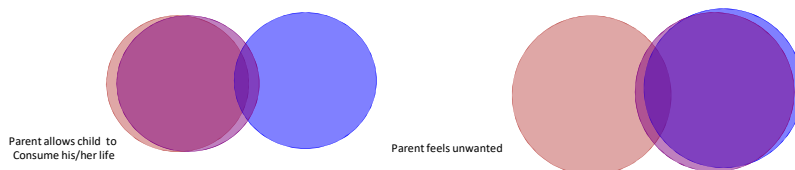
## Marriage in the Middle



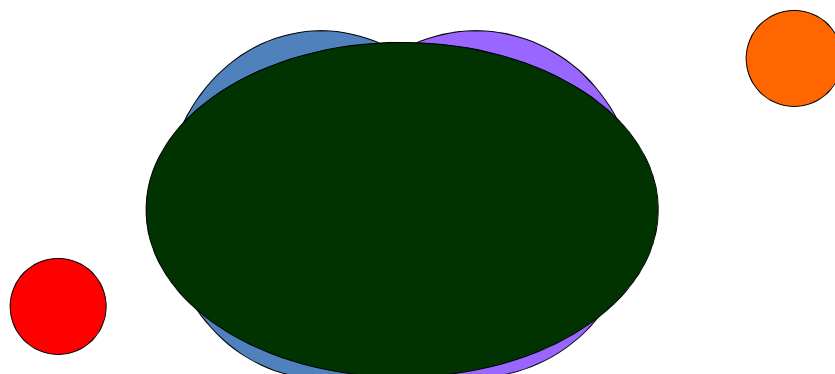


## Unhealthy Structures Parent Child Parent

Child overwhelms Parent



## Unhealthy Relationship Parents allow child to consume everything





## TEAMWORK



- Adopt a No-Losers Policy: When one person in a relationship loses, everyone loses. Make it a Win-Win!
- Winning is finding a solution both people feel good about
- Negotiate ---- Don' t Compromise!
- Brainstorm, select, then implement a win-win solution
- Evaluate and rework the solution if necessary

\*Adapted from Smalley, Gary. 2004. *The DNA of Relationships*. Smalley Publishing Group

## The Power of One

- Take control of your own thoughts, feelings, and actions
- Take responsibility for your own triggers
- Don' t give others the power to control your feelings – the only person you can control is yourself
- Don' t look to others to make you happy
- Become the CEO of your own life
- Forgiveness heals relationships



\*Adapted from Smalley, Gary. 2004. *The DNA of Relationships*. Smalley Publishing Group



## Acceptance

Accept yourself: emotions fears needs desires strengths challenges

Accept your partner: emotions fears needs desires strengths challenges

*Our emotional reactions change when we adjust  
our expectations through acceptance*

*Acceptance allows you not only to live with the  
struggle but to grow from it*

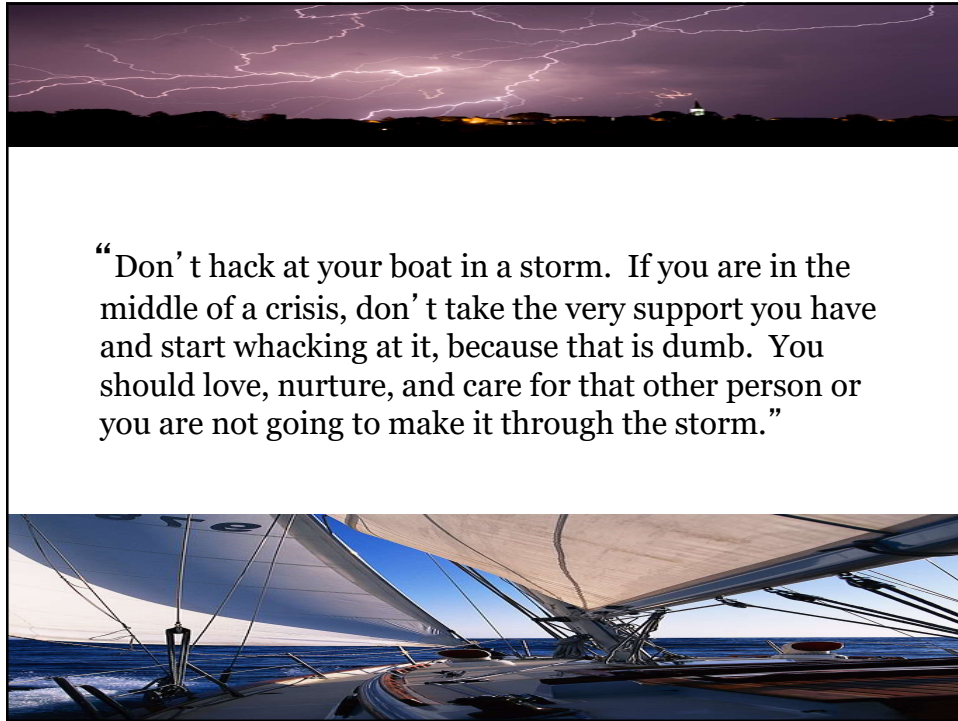
## **POWER IN CHANGE**

- **You can't force the other person to change**
- **The only person you can change is yourself**
- **Leave room for serendipity – allow change to happen in unexpected places**

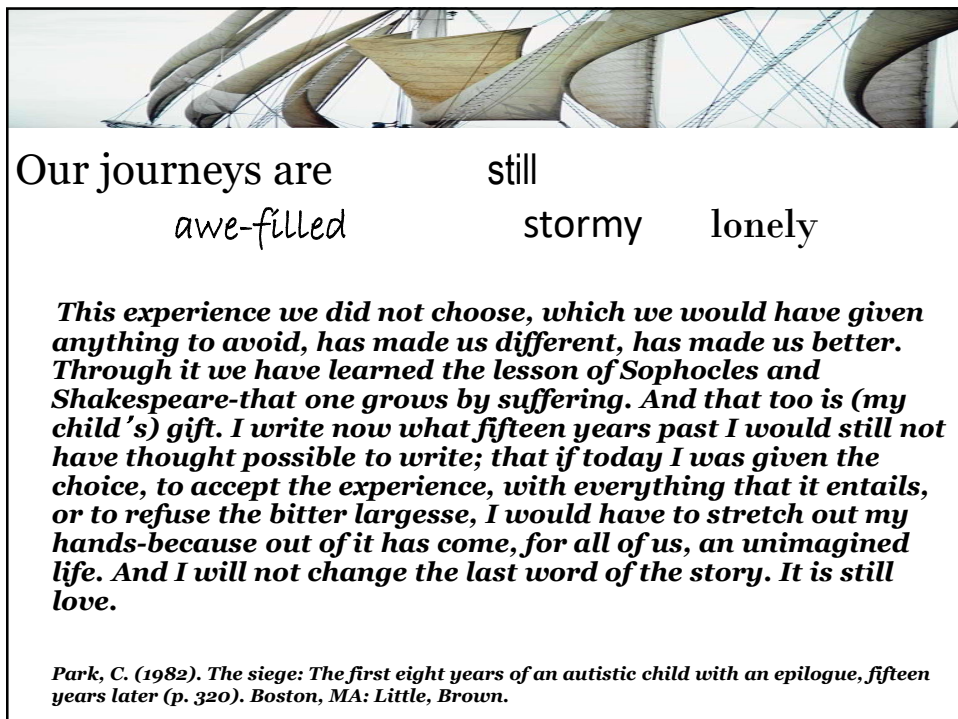


\*Adapted from Marshak, Laura E., Prezant, Fran Pollack. 2007.  
*Married with special needs children: a couples' guide to keeping connected.* Woodbine House





“Don’ t hack at your boat in a storm. If you are in the middle of a crisis, don’ t take the very support you have and start whacking at it, because that is dumb. You should love, nurture, and care for that other person or you are not going to make it through the storm.”



Our journeys are                      still  
awe-filled                      stormy      lonely

***This experience we did not choose, which we would have given anything to avoid, has made us different, has made us better. Through it we have learned the lesson of Sophocles and Shakespeare-that one grows by suffering. And that too is (my child’s) gift. I write now what fifteen years past I would still not have thought possible to write; that if today I was given the choice, to accept the experience, with everything that it entails, or to refuse the bitter largesse, I would have to stretch out my hands-because out of it has come, for all of us, an unimagined life. And I will not change the last word of the story. It is still love.***

***Park, C. (1982). The siege: The first eight years of an autistic child with an epilogue, fifteen years later (p. 320). Boston, MA: Little, Brown.***

- Recommended Reading Marshak, Laura E., Prezant, Fran Pollack. 2007.

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