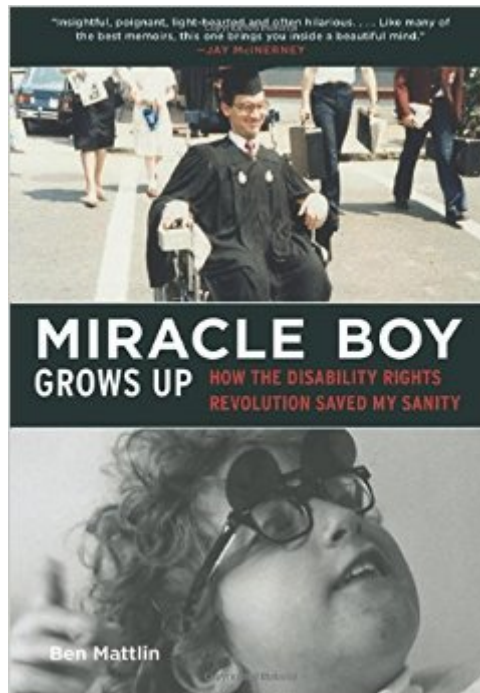


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# Miracle Boy Grows Up: How The Disability Rights Revolution Saved My Sanity



## Synopsis

"An insightful, poignant, light-hearted and often hilarious memoir" (Jay McInerney). Ben Mattlin lives a normal, independent life. Why is that interesting? Because Mattlin was born with spinal muscular atrophy, a congenital muscle weakness from which he was expected to die in childhood. Not only did Mattlin survive, he became one of the first students in a wheelchair to attend Harvard, from which he graduated and became a professional writer. His advantage? Mattlin's life happened to parallel the growth of the disability rights movement, so that in many ways he did not feel he was disadvantaged at all, merely different. *Miracle Boy Grows Up* is a witty, unsentimental memoir you won't forget, told with engrossing intelligence and a unique perspective on living with a disability in the United States.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (127 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I came across Mattlin as I was desperately searching for information on "mixed ability" relationships. My partner has SMA and has since a child and I am able-bodied (or TAB). I was worried about whether or not we could make it work, whether I would be able to handle it; the list of worries go on and on...This book eased my worries, but also gave me more than just information on mixed ability relationships. The historical research and presentation about the disability rights movement fostered my interest in disability advocacy and gave me a thorough background of the movement. Mattlin's story is about him growing up and, like I said, the disability rights movement. He shares the challenges that he faced in a time where people with differing abilities from the mass culture were

still stigmatized and discriminated against. Throughout the book, both the readers and Mattlin learn just how lucky he was to come from the background he did. A few times, he gets a glimpse into the world of other disabled people at hospitals, rehabilitation centers, camps, etc...He discovers that not all of them have parents who advocate or even want them. You learn of the case of "Baby Doe"--two parents were allowed to starve their child to death because it had a disability. Luckily for readers and for Mattlin, that did not happen to him. There are now legal protections against this, but there is still a cultural battle against prenatal testing and the ability to abort a child simply on the fact that they will be disabled (I go back and forth on this as an extremely pro-choice person). For someone who didn't really know much about the disability rights movement aside from the ADA, Mattlin provides a great explanation of what happened, when it happened, and the context in which it happened.

Ben Mattlin is a professional journalist, a Harvard graduate, husband to an attractive accomplished woman, and father to two daughters, and he lives in Los Angeles. So by any reasonable standard, he is a disgustingly accomplished human being with a pretty sweet existence. Far worse, he has accomplished all this without ever taking a step. He complains about being seen as a heartwarming inspirational story by people who don't know him, but if you ask me, he need not worry. To be frank, his story made me wonder what the hell is wrong with ME and what I have been doing with my own life. Tip: Don't let your spouse read this unless you want him/her to start looking askance at you 24/7 with a gaze that clearly says, "Why are you on that couch watching Dog the Bounty Hunter when you could be running down freelance work or publishing an extremely flattering portrait of me?"All right, now to be serious about this very, very good book."Miracle Boy Grows Up: How the Disability Rights Revolution Saved My Sanity" is a revelatory account of the author's life (to date) against the broader background of the revolution in recognition of disability rights in the United States. If you are like me, you will have had very little previous consciousness of this neglected movement, which has been quite comparable in scale and significance to the other great civil rights struggles of the past century. (We've all heard of Martin Luther King and Gloria Steinem; until this book, I had never heard of Ed Roberts or the Rolling Quads.)51 million Americans have some sort of disability; as Mattlin notes, each of us is merely temporarily ambulatory.

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