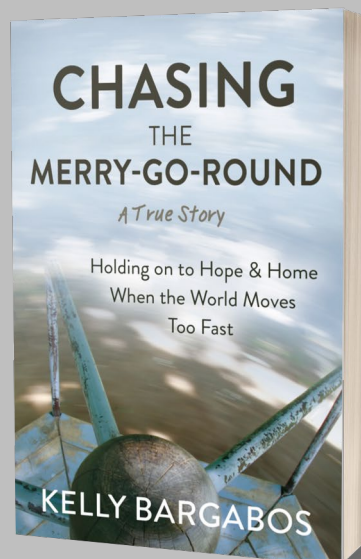


The Official
Book Club
Guide
for

CHASING THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

Holding on to Hope & Home When
the World Moves Too Fast

By Kelly Bargabos

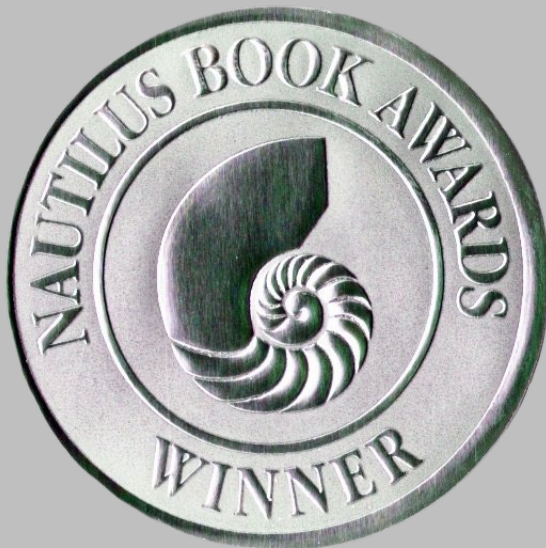


CHASING THE MERRY-GO-ROUND, a True Story by Kelly Bargabos

RECOGNITION

Chasing the Merry-Go-Round was a 2018 Nautilus Book Award Silver winner and a finalist in the National Indie Excellence Awards.

It has also been recommended by the San Diego Writers and Editors Guild and recognized as a semi-finalist in the William Faulkner Creative Writing Competition.



Life moves fast. Too fast for some people.

This is the true story of what it's like to live in a world where you can't keep up.

Bobby was ten months old when my mom and dad rescued him from birth parents who were slowly killing him. He was adopted into our family after a lengthy custody battle. Instead of that settling him, it set off a lifelong struggle to find a place to belong, a place to call home.

Like an old-fashioned merry-go-round, the world moved at a speed that was just too fast for Bobby. He couldn't keep up, which prevented him from keeping a job, a roof over his head, and the basics needed to survive. The life he dreamt of was always out of reach.

No one knew why.

While cultural ideals of what a "normal" life looks like can distort our perspective, *Chasing the Merry-Go-Round* allows readers to see the world through the eyes of a person with intellectual and physical disabilities, which can often be invisible, especially at first glance. It's a story about struggle and hope, survival and resilience, and most of all, the gift of acceptance and love.

"Kelly Bargabos's...honest and unsparing...literary narrative...takes us down the rabbit hole of caring for a special-needs sibling. Despite the dark turns and dead ends that stymie Bobby's progress, this is a journey illuminated by hope."

—Linda Lowen is co-host/co-producer of *Take Care*, a weekly NPR radio show



DISCUSSION PROMPTS



Explore the metaphor of the Merry-Go-Round. Did it work for you? In what way?

Was the author successful in creating a compelling story and character arc even though it was a true story of real-life events?

What scene was the most powerful for you?

What were the themes that resonated with you?

What did you think of the author (Kelly) weaving in her own story line of events happening with her husband? Was this effective? Or unnecessary?

Do you believe our culture discriminates against people with Invisible Disabilities? In what ways?

How has this book changed the way you view others and the world?



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FAQs

WHAT IS AN INVISIBLE DISABILITY?

An invisible disability, whether it's physical, mental, or neurological, is one that is not obvious at first glance. They are hidden from our view. There's no outward sign that fits our culture's preconceived ideas of what defines a disability. An invisible disability causes limitations with movements, senses, or activities, or creates other challenges that just make ordinary life more difficult. Because of the invisible nature, people that struggle with these are often judged, misunderstood, and marginalized.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF AN INVISIBLE DISABILITY?

Depression, PTSD, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, intellectual limitations, learning disabilities, low IQ, traumatic brain injury, autoimmune disease, narcolepsy, epilepsy, lupus, chronic pain, and many, many more.

HOW CAN WE HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE CHALLENGED WITH AN INVISIBLE DISABILITY?

1. Awareness
2. Understanding
3. Acceptance

WHO IS KELLY BARGABOS?



Kelly is an author, a leader, and a voice who has two other books—her recently released novel, *LOVING LAVENDER FINCH*, and *HERE TO LEAD: Mastering the Art of Leadership in Order to Execute Strategy, Advance Change, and Drive Results*. She is also the host of two podcasts, *ALL THERE IS* and *HERE TO LEAD*. She lives in Syracuse, NY with her husband. Find out more at kellybargabos.com.

A Note From the Author

Dear Reader,

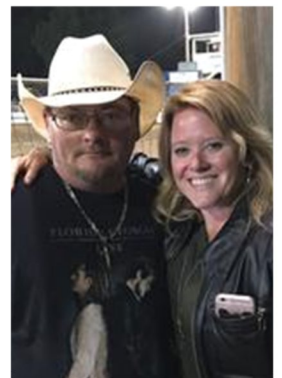
My heart has always been to tell the story of my brother, Bobby, so that people could see what life is truly like for someone like him. In a culture that has historically valued strength over weakness, intellect over character, and accomplishment over a simpler life, a segment of our population is systemically and repeatedly marginalized—**unseen and unheard**. When someone has physical disabilities that are invisible and intellectual limitations that aren't always obvious, life is challenging in ways that most of us don't understand.

I began our story in 1976 when Bobby first entered my life. I told his story mostly chronologically, but life is not always a neat, narrative arc that moves in a linear, chronological, and progressive path. Often and almost always, it is a series or set of messy circles that intersect and change and move and sometimes sit still for many years until one day something happens, or someone says something at just the right time, in just the right way, and you suddenly see something clearly for the very first time in your life. You realize that something that happened to the six-year-old version of you is directly connected to your forty-year-old self, completing a circle that was in you all along and you had no idea.

I discovered through the writing, that this story, the story of Bobby and me, was always about home. Bobby was suddenly removed from his home of origin at ten months old and has spent the rest of his life searching for and wanting desperately to have his own home, getting close at times but never quite attaining it. For Bobby, home is tangible: a place constructed of a dining room, a garage, and a yard. I've learned from Bobby, and my work with my therapist, that I have also been on a quest for home. But for me, home is abstract: an ideal constructed of the people I love. My quest has been to keep those people intact, safe, cared for and stable. Only then could my home be at peace.

There are many people like my brother in this world—people who need a little extra help to keep up with this fast-paced system we've created. How we care for those who need help has an everlasting impact. If the basic needs of a person's spirit, soul and body are met, it allows them the ability to keep their own corner of the world—their home—safe and prosperous for them and their family. This is all there is.

Kelly



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