



# 5 Phases of Special-Needs Parenting

with Sandra Peoples, based on her book,  
*Unexpected Blessings: The Joys and Possibilities  
of Life in a Special-Needs Family*

# I grew up in a special-needs family

When we got James's autism diagnosis in 2010, I knew where to turn for advice—my own parents.

Based on our experiences, their experiences, and the experiences of those around us, I noticed a pattern in the lives of special-needs families.

That pattern is what I call the 5 Phases of Special-Needs Parenting.





Today I'll share  
with you those 5  
phases.

Like our family, I hope  
you can move from a  
place of pain to finding  
your purpose.

As we look at each step, think  
about where you are and where  
God wants to take you in the  
future.



# THE 5 PHASES OF SPECIAL-NEEDS PARENTING

Sandra Peoples

Phase 1

Recognize  
Plan B

Phase 2

Phase 3

Phase 4

Phase 5

Based on the book, *Unexpected Blessings: The Joys and Possibilities of Life in a Special-Needs Family*



# Phase 1: Recognize Plan B

No matter when you heard a diagnosis for your child, it was a surprise.

The words that best describe phase 1 are confusion, disappointment, anger, and depression. We all react in different ways.

But what we have to realize in phase 1 is that the diagnosis that surprised us did not surprise God.



This  
wasn't a  
mistake.

This  
didn't  
surprise  
God.

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Phase 1

Recognize  
Plan B

Phase 2

Recover &  
Rebuild  
Rhythms

Phase 3

Phase 4

Phase 5

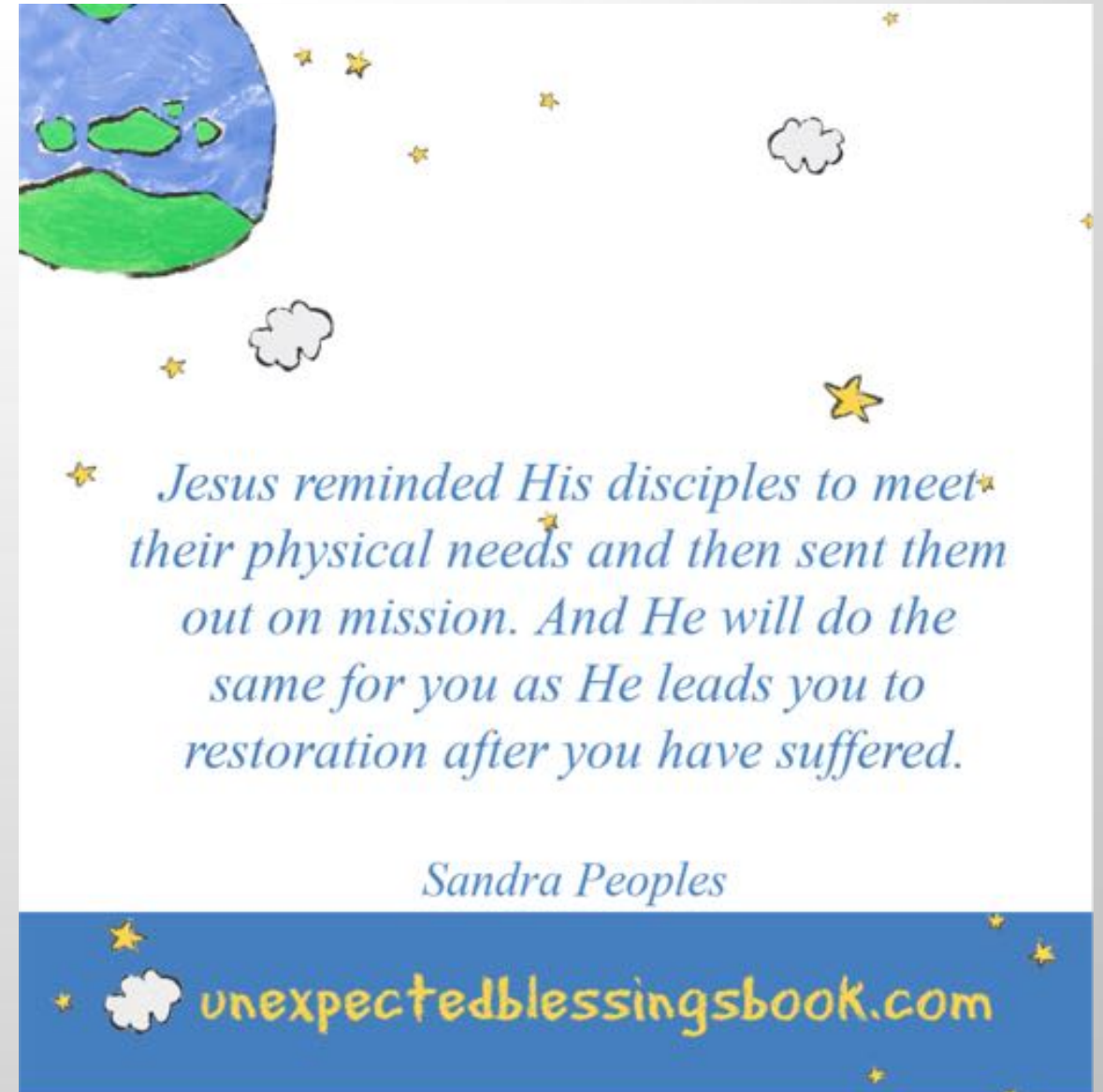
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## Phase 2: Recover & Rebuild Rhythms

Once you accept Plan B, you can develop a new normal. In this phase you focus on self care and rebuilding rhythms that work for your family.

- Learn to say no
- Eliminate decision fatigue
- Establish household routines



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Reinforce  
Your Faith  
Foundation

## Phase 4

## Phase 5

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# Phase 3: Reinforce Your Faith Foundation

You need a theology of disability based on Scripture:

- [Psalm 139](#) – We are all fearfully and wonderfully made
- [Exodus 4:11](#) – God allows disabilities for His purpose
- [John 9](#) – Jesus Himself said that disabilities exist so “that the works of God might be displayed ... “



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## Phase 4

Renew  
Relationships

## Phase 5

Based on the book, *Unexpected Blessings: The Joys and Possibilities of Life in a Special-Needs Family*



# Phase 4: Renew Relationships

In this phase, you work to strengthen the relationships you have

- With your spouse
- With your typical children
- With extended family and friends
- With your church family

"In times of high stress, we are reminded of what's most important—relying on God and others."

—Sandra Peoples,  
from *Unexpected Blessings*  
#MyUnexpectedBlessings

 BETHANYHOUSE





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Renew  
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## Phase 5

Reach Out  
to Others

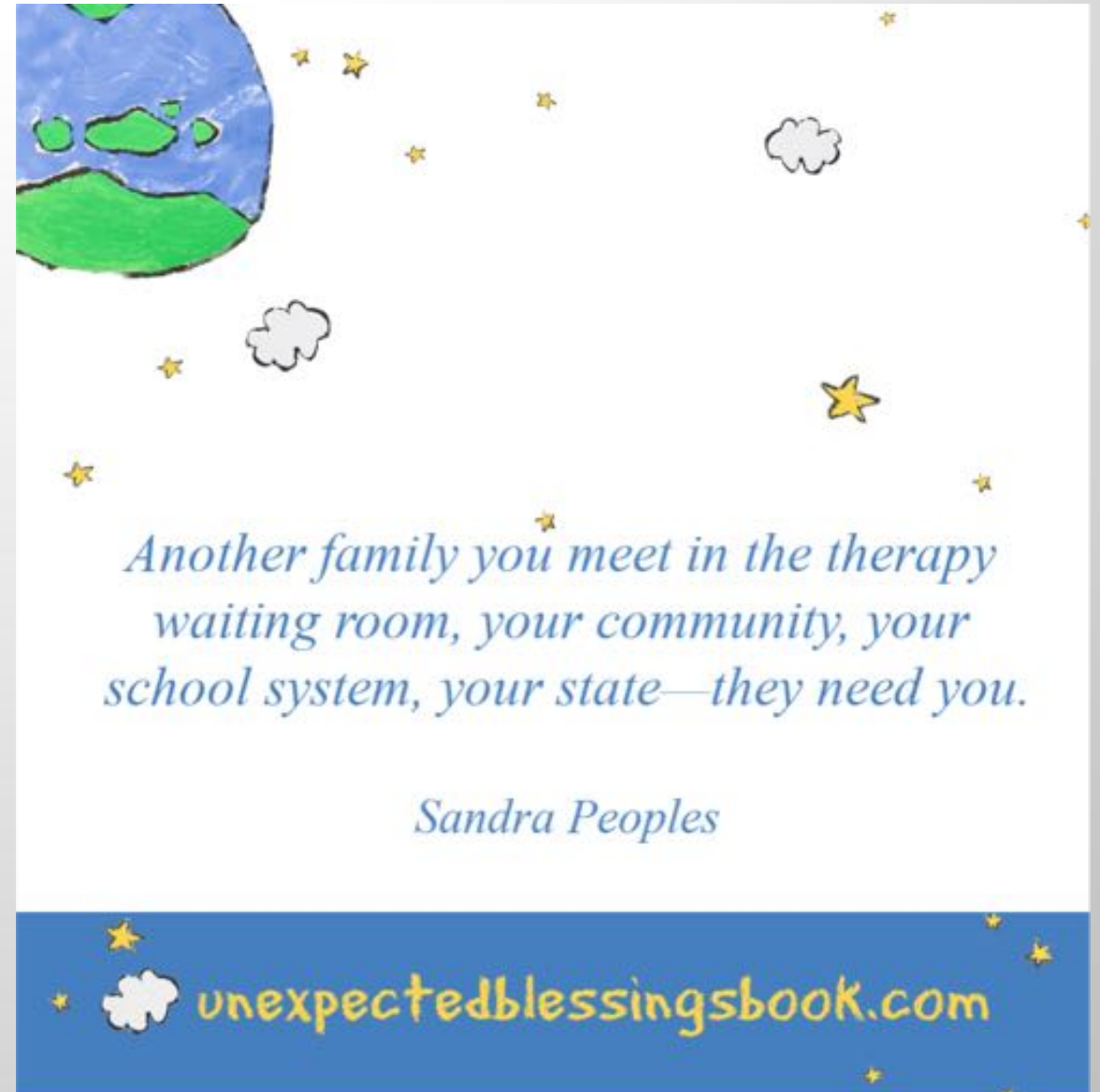
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# Phase 5: Reach Out to Others

Make a positive difference in the life of one other family by using the gifts and knowledge God has given you. And if you feel led, make a difference for another family or for a larger group of families.

Don't waste your family's experiences.



You can learn more about the 5 phases and my advice for moving through each one in *Unexpected Blessings: The Joys and Possibilities of Life in a Special-Needs Family*. Order a copy from your favorite retailer.

Visit  
[unexpectedblessingsbook.com](http://unexpectedblessingsbook.com)  
for more information!

