

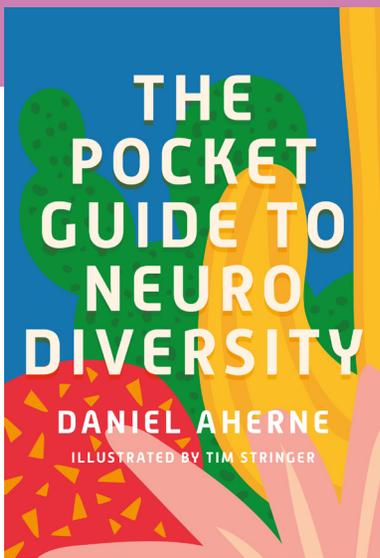
Create Naturally: Go Outside and Rediscover Nature with 15 Artists by

Marcia Young, Schiffer Publishing

This is the most beautiful and inspiring book. The 15 artists featured are hugely different in the work they do and what they create, and also in the materials they use and how they engage with nature. What really drew me into the book are the photographs – plentiful and gorgeous – of the finished items and of the detail of making and the shapes and patterns of nature that inspire. I first started to look at this book after a day working in our garden and I was reminded

of what I love about being outside – colour, shape, texture, pattern. I love how the artists are both inspired by nature but also work in and with it – creating permanent and non-permanent pieces and sometimes simply focusing on the process itself. There is a chapter for each artist with Young’s reflections and interviews, and comments from the creators. At the end of every chapter is a Go Outside spread to inspire the reader. “Nick reminds us that nature is a conscious entity that has things to teach us – if we ask. He encourages letting go of defined processes, sitting with your own boredom, and listening to the ideas that float to the surface of your mind.” There is so much variety and beauty and skill and creation in this book that can inspire all of us, in many different ways. **SF**

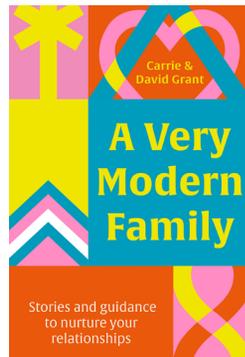




The Pocket Guide to Neurodiversity by Daniel Aherne, illustrated by Tim Stringer, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

This is an incredibly useful and helpful guide to neurodiversity. Daniel Aherne works to support businesses in helping them better understand neurodivergent employees. With this guide he is seeking to educate all of us about neurodiversity and the benefits of adapting workplaces, schools, communication styles and attitudes in order to gain from the talents neurodivergent people can bring when they aren't deterred or excluded by set-ups and systems. Aherne writes, "neurodiversity is the celebration, recognition and acceptance that we all experience the world in different ways." The definition is asking us to move away from thinking about 'normal' and, therefore, those with 'additional needs', and seeing that each person is unique and individual and that neurodiversity is just the same as biodiversity. Problems only arise because so much in society is set up for the 'standard', rather than for diversity.

Aherne provides a really accessible guide to neurotypes and adaptations that can help, and then looks at particular aspects such as sensory processing and communication. He makes the valid point that it's easier for Greta Thunberg, as an autistic person, to deliver a speech to 500 people than to have a spontaneous conversation with one other person. If we accept each person's unique talents, we can all benefit. We need to reflect on whether the way we interact with and approach others actually shuts out neurodivergent people from engaging, because it's we who are missing out in that situation. I really like the positive approach and informative style of this book and have found it helpful and inspiring. **SF**



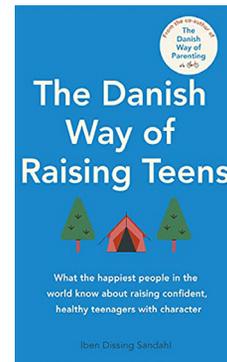
A Very Modern Family: Stories and Guidance to Nurture Your Relationships by Carrie and David Grant, Piatkus

Carrie and David Grant have four

children, all of whom are neurodivergent, and three of whom identify as trans or non-binary, and gay or queer. All have faced serious mental health challenges. Carrie and David take turns to tell their family's story, and each offers their own reflections on their family's experiences: how they and their children have been challenged; what they have learned along the way; and how they have grown, individually and collectively. With real honesty, they look back at their own childhoods and unpick how their upbringings set initial expectations for family life that have been repeatedly tested. They come from very different backgrounds and race and culture come into their discussions.

David is open about his initial resistance to bending to his children's needs, believing, at first, that his children needed to behave as he expected them to – as he had been expected to as a child. He often credits Carrie with arriving at an understanding ahead of him, but they both demonstrate an astonishing capacity for growth. They meet their children's needs with compassion and acceptance, and have been willing to push themselves out of their comfort zones to be the parents their children need them to be. Their love and respect for each other, as well as their children, is clear.

Throughout the book, Carrie and David share a huge amount of their learning, not just on a personal level, but also in terms of how to negotiate systems not set up to meet the needs of all children. Accounts of their battles with authorities will be invaluable for parents facing similar negotiations. But the book's reach is wide and there is guidance, inspiration and solace here for all families to benefit from. However our children show up in the world, there will times when we feel out of our depth. This book helps us to know that it is within us to find the strength needed to meet the challenges we face. **AE**



The Danish Way of Raising Teens: What the Happiest People in the World Know About Raising Confident, Healthy Teenagers with Character by Iben Dissing Sandahl, Piatkus

Denmark has been voted the happiest country in the world by the OECD for more than 40 years, and in her book *The Danish Way of Parenting*, Sandahl looked at why upbringing is influenced by ingrained values and how that cycle repeats itself. In her latest book, Sandahl looks particularly at how Danish teenagers are parented, and how this contributes to the overall ethos of happiness.

Many of the elements discussed are universal – trust, authenticity, empathy. However, some elements are more specific to Danish culture, such as *efterskoles*, which are independent residential schools for students aged between 14 and 18 years, where education is mixed with activities and the opportunity to learn independence. Sandahl also writes about attitudes to alcohol in Denmark, accepting that there is quite a relaxed attitude to teens drinking in Denmark. She relates this to the trust element, so that the drinking is just part of having fun: "Yep, almost everywhere where Danes meet alcohol is to be found. Enjoying alcohol is an integral part of our cultural identity; Danish children grow up exposed to it." With this in mind, Sandahl writes about fun and socialising, rather than binge drinking and crime, in a way that implies that part of the happiness is that Danes and their teens have found a healthy balance to alcohol. It's this balance that seems to permeate the approach 'yes, you can go out, but please be home by this time'. Sandahl writes about authenticity, talking openly to teens but maintaining boundaries – approaches that are not specific to Denmark.

This is a really interesting book about teens and how to parent, to which Sandahl brings not only her Danishness, but also her parenting experiences (her daughters are now 19 and 22), and her work as a teacher and psychotherapist. If you are looking for a reflective book on parenting teens, with a desirable Scandi vibe, I can recommend this. **SF**