



**North Shore
Community Resources**

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Review: “Safe and Secure: Six steps to creating a good life for people with disabilities” by Al Etmanski

By Sana Shahram, Writer, Supporting Caregivers Across the Lifespan Project.

Safe and Secure is an absolute must read for anyone caring for another person with a disability. As the book often points out, it is difficult for someone who has never dealt with the complexities involved in caring for a person with a disability to even begin to understand the vast responsibilities that a caregiver has in order to ensure the quality and safety of the person with a disability’s life.

The content of this book is inspired by the experiences of thousands of families and caring friends that have come through the Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN). PLAN is an independently financed family-led organization that specializes in assisting families in creating a good life for their relatives with disabilities (www.plan.ca). As such, *Safe and Secure* has at its core the driving principle that creating a good life for the person with a disability is a priority. This focus sets the tone for an instructional book that speaks from lived experiences rather than by preached-directives and provides readers with the peace of mind that they are not alone.

Personal stories in this book appear alongside practical information and help give life and humanity to what could otherwise be considered challenging and uncomfortable tasks like planning for a decline in health. In the words of the author however, “simply existing is not enough; we also want our family members to have a good life.” The book repeatedly drives home the importance of making plans and arrangements to ensure the best possible life for your relative with a disability. The personal stories and experiences further cement not only the importance of the steps in this book, but also the fact that creating a safe and secure life for your loved one with a disability is an absolutely attainable goal.

Safe and Secure advocates that we offer people with disabilities a deep-seated respect for their individual autonomy by providing them with genuine choices that allow them to execute their own authentic decision-making voice. This insistence on respecting the individuality of the person with a disability throughout the book allows the reader to receive the information in an open manner.

Finally, the author constantly acknowledges that despite the fact that difficult questions continue to persist, the mere consideration of these questions by caregivers exemplifies the

deep love that they have for their care receivers. This acknowledgement helps ground possibly unpalatable tasks of planning for worst case scenarios in the underlying goal of protecting your loved one. This overarching theme of caring and love makes the steps of the book seem attainable, and provides the motivation necessary to manage the tough questions.

This book is available for a free, three week loan from the NSCR Resource Library for those registered with the Caregiver Support Program.