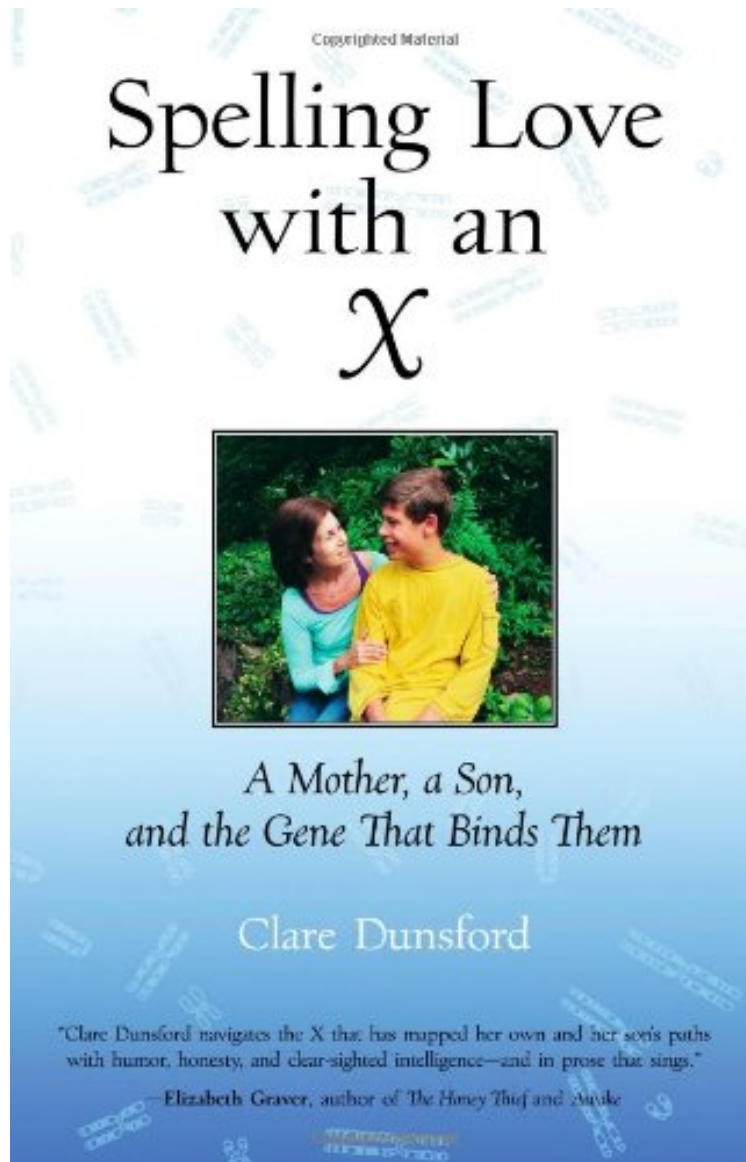


# Spelling Love with an X: A Mother, A Son, and the Gene that Binds Them

Clare Dunsford

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**Clare Dunsford : Spelling Love with an X: A Mother, A Son, and the Gene that Binds Them** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spelling Love with an X: A Mother, A Son, and the Gene that Binds Them:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent book! Our grandson was recently diagnosed with Fragile

...By Susan D. Excellent book ! Our grandson was recently diagnosed with Fragile X and we are learning all we can about this devastating condition. Mrs. Dunsford's book relates the reality of raising a child with Fragile X -- the extreme highs, lows and daily challenges. She's a talented writer to boot. Gives so much info on the condition in an easy to read manner. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A really well written book. By Customer I found this book to be very informative. Everyone should read this book, especially if you know someone with a child with this diagnosis. It really helped me to understand what the family is dealing with. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Classic Love Story By Gwen Miller Hall While informing us about Fragile X Syndrome, Clare Dunsford reminds us in a distinctive voice that much more than genes binds us. Her well-told tale captures the complexity of competing realities running through most of our lives -- identity, vocation, family, faith, parenthood (and the profound difference between motherhood and fatherhood), friendship, support, loneliness and love. So we laugh, cry and rejoice with her as she recounts the frustrations and surprises of her childhood, romances, career and parenting experiences. Her references to classic literature make manifest the mystery encountered in human differences no matter the time or culture, a mystery best understood in the binding of body and spirit despite the fragility of either. "Spelling Love With an X" is a classic love story. Dunsford's X is her and her family's cross (a cross that marks others' lives in other ways) and is only made bearable in anyone's life by Love which is more Divine than human. Her story offers hope to all of us who want to live and love well.

Now in his twenties, Clare Dunsford's adult son, J.P., was diagnosed with fragile X syndrome at age seven. The most common inherited form of mental retardation, fragile X affects the lives of more than a million people in the United States, including those with the full mutation, their families, and treatment professionals. Unlike autism or Down syndrome, fragile X does not strike like a bolt of lightning, leaving its mark on just one person; it spreads throughout a family like a tidal wave. When a child is diagnosed with fragile X, a mother faces the devastating fact that she carries the premutation and has unwittingly passed on the condition. When Dunsford first shared the news about J.P., three of her siblings soon found that they carried the premutation as well, and some had already had children--so three of J.P.'s cousins also live with the cognitive and social challenges of fragile X. Such a family must, Dunsford writes in her poignant, gripping account, "reexamine its past and reassess its future." "Spelling Love with an X" is the first personal memoir about living with fragile X and a reflection on the fragility of human identity in the age of the gene. Recalling the psychic wound of learning that she is genetically "flawed," Dunsford wonders: What do you do when you discover that you are not who you thought you were? How do you tell your parents and siblings that they, too, might be implicated in your disaster? How do you make sense of a life interrupted, cast in a different light? How do you hold the sorrow and joy of a special motherhood in balance? Must we rewrite the old lines with a new (genetic) alphabet? A scholar by nature and training, Dunsford draws on poetry and science to reflect on her life with J.P. and to illuminate his metaphoric way of communicating. Funny and touching stories show J.P.'s impressive verbal dexterity, not uncommon in those with fragile X, and his lovable cheeky streak. Eloquent and intimate, *Spelling Love with an X* reveals the disarming insights of a compassionate scholar on literature, genetic inheritance, and motherhood, and tells the story of a boy who is proud to be "just who I am."

Part poetry, part scientific inquiry, this wonderful memoir is, above all, the story of being complexly human in a world filled with fragility and strength, shadow and light. Clare Dunsford navigates the X that has mapped her own and her son's paths with humor, honesty, and clear-sighted intelligence and in prose that sings. Elizabeth Graver, author of *The Honey Thief and Awake* "Clare Dunsford does much more than inform us concerning a disorder we know too little about. Through a prose both lucid and beautiful, she is able to communicate the strangeness, even the poetry, of fragile X." Clara Claiborne Park, author of *The Siege: A Family's Journey into the World of an Autistic Child and Exiting Nirvana: A Daughter's Life with Autism* "Spelling Love with an X is a beautifully written journey of a woman toward understanding herself, her son, and the twists of fate and DNA that bind them and all of us. Clare Dunsford's powerful and moving memoir is rich with humor, poetry and, most of all, love." Mitchell Zuckoff, author of *Choosing Naia: A Family's Journey* About the Author Clare Dunsford is an associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston College and has been a contributing writer for Boston College Magazine. She was previously an adjunct lecturer in English at Boston College and Harvard University.