

JEANNIE AND BEN EWING'S BRIEF BIO

I believe you don't need permission from anyone to be who you are.

Who I Am

I am a middle-aged wife to Ben and mom of five crazy kiddos: Felicity (12), Sarah (10), Veronica (6), Joey (4), and Auggie (3). Honestly, I never imagined myself having even one child, let alone five, but here I am. The weirdest part is that we don't have a "typical" family, in the sense that some of our kids have developed according to the norm of their peers.

Felicity struggles with anxiety. Sarah was born with a genetic craniofacial condition (Apert syndrome, which I mentioned earlier) that affects her entire body. It's more of a systemic issue than merely a facial one. She currently has fifteen specialists, many of whom we see monthly or even weekly, and she is also on the ASD (autism spectrum disorder), as well as struggling with ADHD and intellectual disabilities.

There are many avocations that fascinate me and capture my attention. These days, they mostly include creative cooking, wine tasting, reading, and walking in nature. Occasionally, I scrap book mementos and photos throughout the year, and I'd love to pick up traveling again, once the kids are a bit older.

Our family lives in northern Indiana. I've always been a Midwestern gal, born and raised as a Hoosier. My husband is a transplant from Colorado, though, and he will always miss his Rocky Mountains.

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Ambivalence

When we think something is right, we tend to think something else is wrong. Same with the words happy/sad or good/bad. Yet sometimes we can feel both, or even multiple, ways at the same time. Something can be partially true and partially false. The world is not necessarily as black-and-white as we hoped when we were kids. It's far more complicated than that.

Part of maturing is accepting and integrating the "both/and" messages or feelings we experience every day, instead of compartmentalizing everything neatly into an "either/or" mentality.

Ambivalence has a lot to do with recognizing paradoxes and finding irony, beauty, and intriguing aspects of life in these. Sitting with our discomfort, or the tension of being on "both sides of the fence" can, in my experience, lead to seismic breakthroughs in one's creative work, relationships, and interior life. Living with duality can be a signal for us to pay more attention to our subconscious or darker emotions. It's not so much that we resolve these, but that we gain wisdom in holding space for contradictory thoughts and/or feelings at the same time.

Permission

Most of us hide or repress our true selves out of fear of rejection or abandonment. If we begin to detach from external validation, we can discover a powerful and momentous shift in finding we can be ourselves without anyone liking us, approving of us, or offering affirmation.

The internal locus of control is really important when we're talking about **giving ourselves space to be who we are**. This does not mean bulldozing others, but rather, being gentle and kind to ourselves as we often are to others.

Growth does not happen when we are stuck in destructive patterns or unhealthy relationships. In order to find our unique footprint in this world, we can learn appropriate boundaries and ways of communicating our needs respectfully and without guilt.

Guilt and shame are recurring narratives when we find ourselves feeling trapped, insignificant, or unable to do what brings us the fullness of joy in life. **Accepting our imperfections** is a key step in knowing how to fully embrace all of life, its ups and its downs.

Our concept of self changes as we age and gain new insights and life experiences. I also think loss significantly impacts our worldview and view of self. Being open to the invitation of something new emerging from something painful can be an encouragement in seasons, or even fleeting moments, of feeling like our lives have become stagnant.

Grief and Loss

Grief is not exclusive to death. We grieve over any significant and devastating loss. **Grief includes the totality of the psychological, physiological, and spiritual experience of loss.**

Grief and ambivalence are partners who hold hands. It's really unlikely you'll grieve without the conflict of two opposing beliefs, thoughts, or feelings. We also **do not need outside permission to grieve**. Instead, loving oneself necessarily and naturally moves us to grieve as we need to, when we need to, for as long as we need to.

No one wants to feel pain or experience suffering, but it is an unfortunate reality in our lives. I think grieving well means to welcome whatever emotions, thoughts, and experiences might come to us when we have lost someone or something we love. **When we give grief space in our thoughts and feelings, it can teach us how to love more fully and appreciate our own lives.**

Normalizing grief involves talking openly about, rather than hiding, our pain around losses. We do this with a trusted one or two people who can support us and help us process our grief.

Expectations revolving around grief often leave us frustrated when we find it popping up unexpectedly after we thought we'd "moved on" or "gotten over it." Instead, if we shift our expectations from moving on to moving through or forward, we will understand that grief is a teacher and mentor who stops by for a visit now and then. We can invite her in to stay a while.

The Human Right to Live

Every human has the right to live a fulfilling, happy, and free life. We each have a unique footprint in this world, and **our stories are worth sharing.**

Because of the pervasiveness of loneliness in our culture, I want to reach the people who feel lost, ignored, overlooked, and rejected. I have a heart to want to know those who are different from me. Having real conversations with people enriches my ability to sit with those who have suffered terrible things.

People with disabilities deserve access to the same resources, job skills, and recreational pursuits as those without disabilities. Advocating for my daughter, Sarah (who was born with a rare genetic condition called Apert syndrome), and those like her to have access to a meaningful and fulfilling life matters deeply to me.

Destigmatizing Psychological Diagnoses and Labels

Destigmatizing mental illness by understanding the etiology of certain illnesses, such as depression, can **increase our empathy towards those who suffer.**

Self-awareness and self-advocacy is vital to everyone's overall well-being. If we all cared for our minds and regulated our emotions with more cognizance, we may see fewer divisive and combative reactions in our interactions with others.

Most mothers I know are suffering silently. They carry the bulk of the emotional labor, sometimes more than that (e.g., physical labor, too), and I want to be a voice for and to them – not necessarily to change their circumstances, but to reach their heart and give language to their experiences. I have personally experienced the long-term devastation of postpartum depression.

Postpartum depression and anxiety can leave mother debilitated and sometimes hospitalized; therefore, family planning programs of all varieties could include understanding the risk factors, common signs and symptoms, and helpful resources for expectant mothers. I'd like to see conversations in religious communities about how to support their community members, and even those who are marginalized from any sort of organized practice of religion, who suffer from mental illnesses.

My Professional Credentials

I don't think you have to be credentialed in professional writing or editing in order to become successful in the industry. I am proof of that. My college degrees are in Psychology (B.A.) and School Counseling (M.S.Ed.), and I knew nothing about query letters or protocol in the publishing world. Today, I am a fulfilled part-time copy editor and proofreader for indie authors, as well as a hybrid author (both self- and traditionally published) and public speaker.

You can find my books [here](#) and learn more about what I speak about [here](#).

My Background and Creative Work

When I was a little girl, my dream was to become a published author. I always had a creative mind and loved to explore the world using various media, including watercolors, pencil sketches, charcoal, and acrylics. Writing short stories became an avenue in which I could do two things: escape my real life and imagine what else might exist in the world.

From the day I was gifted a Hello Kitty diary with a lock and key (in third grade, on my birthday), I journaled daily. Looking back, I think that's why writing publicly became a natural transition from "Dear Diary" entries. It was the practice that homed my craft.

I got started professionally writing by volunteering to be a guest blogger on many websites (CatholicMom.com was one of them). Now, nearly ten years later, my work is visible on dozens of websites and print publications.

I truly believe that **perseverance is key to fulfilling the heart's longings.**
