

## Shine: Uplifting Secular Music For Parents

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Even in a place, like Portland, with a vibrant musical scene, there isn't really a for-parents niche. Parents usually have the option of tunes geared toward their kids, [child-friendly versions of rock staples](#), or ignoring their children altogether and listening to adult radio. Even for those looking to purchase a few tracks, it seems like no one is really writing for those who have traded in late-night shows for late-night feedings. And if you're looking for positive, uplifting music? Well, then you'd better have some sort of religious affiliation, because there isn't much in the way of positive encouragement to be found without connection to one deity or another. What's worse is that even in that subset of a subset, the music for parents seems to be mostly "Jesus never gives you more than you can handle."

As someone who is not only the parent to and advocate for two children with atypical development, but a part-time caregiver to a friend with cancer and a paraplegic brother, I have a hard time with that sentiment sometimes. I found myself complaining to my husband just a while ago that I'd like some music where the lyrics deal with what I am going through, instead of dwelling on angst teen breakups, but that didn't patronize me with "it'll all get better, just be positive" either. "Is there music written for parents with special-needs kids, by someone who understands?" I asked. An impossible combination, I thought.

Enter "Shine: Selected Songs For Grown-ups." With songs written and sung by Rachel de Azevedo Coleman, the Emmy-nominated star of the PBS show Signing Time, this album is just sweet enough to be an encouragement without feeling saccharine. The music is involved and intricate, and it is a reminder that she was a musician long before she became a rockstar for toddlers. She's got the life-experience credentials to write them, too, as one of her daughters was born deaf, and the other has spina bifida and cerebral palsy. Coleman penned these lyrics as she dealt with the disabilities faced by Leah and Lucy, and the songs are honest and sometimes achingly on target.

When she begs for some form of communication from her youngest in "Show Me A Sign," it resonates deep inside me, as we're still waiting for my son to tell us he loves us. She sings in "Nobody Would Know" about the balancing act that parents with atypical kids do, where they act like everything is fine in public and cry alone at home. She even puts into words one of the most important lessons that parents like us have to learn, when she croons "Maybe we won't find easy/But, baby, we've found the good." The CD is full of so much love for her daughters, and her lyrics give permission to parents like us to mourn the loss of the easy: of the planned life, of the healthy child who has unlimited options. Her message is one of transformation, though, from one set of hopes and dreams to another set. Just because it isn't easy, doesn't make it bad. The title track is heartbreaking and touching, no matter how many times I listen to it. Here's the [link](#) if you'd like to give it a listen (fourth from the bottom).

Without being preachy or overly sunny, Coleman has managed to take her gifts of music and song and create an album that any parent can relate to, but that really reaches out to those parents whose children require extra care. I know a few fellow parents who I think it would mean something to, and I plan on [buying them a copy](#). It's musically sound as well, which makes it something you don't have to be embarrassed to share...even with parents who still listen to real music.

"Sometimes I see you stuck  
For such a long time  
A daily nothing new  
Pretend I don't mind  
With lists of things you'll never do  
Until somehow you do  
And you do — you do — you shine

The days and months and years,  
they run together  
Is it just one day? Or is this forever?  
You've taught me in your lifetime  
More than I'd learned in mine  
And you do, you do, you shine  
-Shine

From "Shine: Selected Songs For Grown-ups"

Written by Carissa Martos, a mother and advocate for her two children. She also teaches [Family Sign Language Lessons in](#)

[Portland](#), Oregon. Read more about her and her family at [Mostly Medical Misadventures and Mishaps](#).



My two wonderful kiddos  
Pablo Martos

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Carissa Martos is an Examiner from Portland. You can see Carissa's articles at: "<http://www.Examiner.com/x-39784-Portland-Special-Needs-Kids-Examiner>"

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