

14

Elements of an Argument**from “1996 Address to the Democratic National Convention”
by Christopher Reeve**

Over the last few years we have heard a lot about something called “family values.” And like many of you, I have struggled to figure out what that means. But since my accident, I’ve found a definition that seems to make sense. I think it means that we’re all family, that we all have value. And if that’s true, if America really is a family, then we have to recognize that many members of our family are hurting.

And just to take one aspect of it, one in five of us has some kind of disability. You may have an aunt with Parkinson’s disease, a neighbor with a spinal cord injury, or a brother with AIDS, and if we’re really committed to this idea of family, we’ve got to do something about it.

. . .

Sure, we’ve got to balance the budget. And we will.

We have to be extremely careful with every dollar we spend. But we’ve also got to take care of our family—and not slash programs that people need. We should be enabling and healing and curing.

One of the smartest things we can do about disability is to invest in research that will protect us from diseases and lead to cures. . . . Right now, for example, about a quarter million Americans have a spinal cord injury. Our government spends about \$8.7 billion a year just maintaining these members of our family. But we spend only \$40 million a year on research that would actually improve the quality of their lives; get them off public assistance, or even cure them.

We’ve got to be smarter, do better, because the money we invest in research today is going to determine the quality of life of members of our family tomorrow.

And to do that, we don’t need to raise taxes. We just need to raise our expectations. America—America is stronger when all of us take care of all of us. Giving new life to that ideal is the challenge before us tonight.