



BOOK REVIEWS

A parent's guide to Asperger Syndrome and high-functioning autism

Sally Ozonoff, Geraldine Dawson and James McPartland

(2002) Guilford, New York

Taking the view that children who are diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome (AS) share very similar characteristics with those diagnosed with high-functioning autism (HFA), Sally Ozonoff, Geraldine Dawson and James McPartland have devoted this book to both conditions.

This book is an excellent source of information for parents and caregivers of children through to adults who are diagnosed with, or have a suspected diagnosis of, either AS or HFA. A very positive approach is taken to working and living with children with AS or HFA and assisting them to live as functioning members of society by placing emphasis on their strengths and special abilities.

The first section of the book provides a very comprehensive but clearly-written description of AS and HFA, addressing the many questions that parents are likely to ask when their child is diagnosed, including the diagnostic process, possible causes and treatment options.

The second section of the book focuses on how to live with AS and HFA through recognising the child's strengths and working with these to accommodate the needs of the child. The authors emphasise the importance of maintaining consistency and developing routines. Challenging behaviours are discussed, along with practical strategies for minimising the occurrence of these behaviours in the home.

The school environment is also examined. Various placement options, programs and strategies are outlined, encouraging collaboration between parents and teachers so that children will have access to an education that will enable them to reach their potential. Despite the fact that interactions and situations at school can be the source of much anxiety for the child with AS/HFS, the information provided in some

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sections of these chapters is quite brief. Many case examples are provided, however, more detailed information on some topics would be helpful.

In the last two chapters of the book, the topics of social skills, adolescence and post-school life are explored. Advice and problem-solving ideas are provided to help parents increase their child's independence and decrease the impact of difficulties with social reciprocity. Whilst many of the services described and much of the advice given are based on US legislation and systems, the processes for accessing services are explained broadly enough to provide readers with an indication of the availability of such services in Australia.

The strategies, information and real life examples presented in this book make it a very readable and useful guide to be highly recommended to those living with or interested in AS and HFA.

Peer play and the autism spectrum: The art of guiding children's socialization and imagination—integrated play groups field manual

Pamela J. Wolfberg

(2003) Autism Asperger Publishing Company, Kansas

Acknowledging the importance of play and imagination in social development, Pamela Wolfberg has written a field manual that addresses the social deficits that so often prevent children on the autism spectrum from engaging in shared play experiences that are necessary for 'attaining social competence and forming meaningful relationships' (Wolfberg, 2003, ii).

Peer play and the autism spectrum: The art of guiding children's socialization and imagination provides parents, carers and educators with an introduction to the Integrated Play Groups (IPG) model and the basic principles, tools and techniques of which it is comprised. The model offers a structured system of support to promote participation in diverse play experiences that will ultimately allow children of varying ages and abilities on the autism spectrum to develop a

sense of acceptance and belonging in their community.

Wolfberg has very successfully provided a step-by-step guide for implementing the IPG model for those involved with facilitating meaningful learning experiences for young children on the autism spectrum and their typical peers. Clear and practical guidelines on implementing the model are divided into four 'phases':

1. embracing the spirit of play;
2. setting the stage for play;
3. observing children at play; and
4. guided participation in play.

Under each phase, a series of topics are explored, each presented as a separate chapter.

Peer play and the autism spectrum is an extremely practical and user-friendly field manual. The chapters contain a cover page indicating the 'highlights' to be introduced. The key concepts under each topic are presented in text boxes and chapter summaries are provided throughout the book. Each chapter contains case vignettes; samples of checklists and data collection tools; tables and examples of assessment; and instructional strategies to facilitate implementation of the model.

The wealth of information and the resources provided in this manual is innovatively laid out in a way that very thoroughly and clearly explains the means to foster the development of social communication and peer play for children on the autism spectrum.

This field manual provides a means of introducing valuable social experiences to children who are at risk of missing out on the type of play that will give them the foundations for attaining social competence. Wolfberg has ensured that this is not an overwhelming task for those who are in the position to provide this guidance.

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