

ate services for these children, the chapters on educational, sensory integration, and occupational therapy interventions will be immediately practical. The chapter on educational and behavioral interventions includes discussions of programs at specific centers. This is a useful place to start for treaters and families who want to learn about the kinds of school-based programs available. A fine chapter follows on evaluating interventions by using an evidence-based approach.

Often a small book cannot do justice to the scope of problems it addresses. Autism is a large topic that does not easily lend itself to ready

synopsis. The book's editor, Vidya Bhushan Gupta, and the individual contributors have eloquently overcome the difficulty of sharing a large amount of important information in a well-prioritized, easily comprehended, and concise volume. I strongly recommend this volume to any mental health treater who is involved in the care of children and their families who are affected by autism spectrum disorders. I also consider it to be a basic component of the library of pediatric and psychiatric residents who will help families face the challenges of optimizing functioning of their children with autism.

do this in the United States does not translate well to other systems, such as those in the United Kingdom.

It is a sad fact that books about Asperger syndrome still do need to provide their readers with ammunition to persuade skeptics about the disorder; this inclusion probably reflects parents' experience, even now, so many years after Asperger published his case histories. Medical practitioners continue to pour cold water on parents' concerns about children who have pervasive developmental disorders of all kinds and continue to insinuate that it is the parents themselves who need help, for being over-involved or for creating their children's problems. *The OASIS Guide* also recognizes this fact, and both books provide advice to parents about which professionals can be expected to know about Asperger syndrome, what to do if a professional does not diagnose Asperger syndrome, and even what kind of assessment a competent professional should carry out.

In this area—and in most other areas—the coverage of *The OASIS Guide* is more thorough than that of the other book. Bashe and Kirby discuss a common problem for parents, the “undiagnosis.” The most common undiagnosis in the United Kingdom is “autistic tendencies,” which is intended as a means of partly ratifying parents' concerns, but it soon becomes apparent that this is not a diagnosis and will not lead to any additional support or any change in education. Moreover, this undiagnosis stands in the way of any further assessment.

Both books remain agnostic about the fundamental handicap or handicaps of Asperger syndrome yet contain substantial sections about helping these children. Inevitably, therefore, this advice tends to be unsystematic and anecdotal. Very little of the interventions described have an evidence base, and both books take a highly optimistic line about what can be done to help persons with Asperger syndrome that can sometimes seem unrealistic. It is these sections that parents will be likely to consult most often, and both books contain useful advice. *The OASIS Guide*

### **OASIS Guide to Asperger Syndrome: Advice, Support, Insights, and Inspiration**

by Patricia Romanowski Bashe and Barbara L. Kirby;  
New York, Crown Publishers, 2001, 480 pages, \$27.50

### **A Parents' Guide to Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism: How to Meet the Challenges and Help Your Child Thrive**

by Sally Ozonoff, Geraldine Dawson, and James McPartland;  
New York, Guilford Press, 2002, 278 pages, \$17.95 softcover

**Digby Tantam, Ph.D., M.P.H.**

Each of these books is aimed primarily at the parents of persons with Asperger syndrome. One is written by professionals who are well known in the field, the other by parents whose OASIS (Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support) Web site has become one of the most visited Asperger destinations. *The OASIS Guide to Asperger Syndrome: Advice, Support, Insight, and Inspiration* is based partly on surveys of parents visiting the OASIS site. This book is about 50 percent longer and about 50 percent more expensive than the other book reviewed here.

Neither book addresses adolescence or adulthood satisfactorily: *The OASIS Guide* states that little is

known about the period beyond childhood, although it may be more correct to say that the authors are not so familiar with that period. Sally Ozonoff and her coauthors, in *A Parents' Guide to Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism: How to Meet the Challenges and Help Your Child Thrive*, do give a brief overview of what parents might expect. They acknowledge their concentration on childhood in their book, as reflected in the book's subtitle.

Both books are written with a U.S. audience in mind. This may seem a small consideration, but, in fact, education and service provision vary considerably from country to country. Both books, quite rightly, recognize that parents have to advocate for their children who have Asperger syndrome and must be sophisticated users of “the system.” The very helpful—and generally measured—advice to parents in both books about how to

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seems a bit more realistic, as is befitting of a book that is informed by questions posed by parents themselves, and gives more direct advice about how parents can handle situations. Comorbid conditions get much better coverage in the OASIS book, which gives an excellent discussion of the pros and cons of methylphenidate and other medication.

I shall be consulting both books in the future and will recommend them to any American family consulting me. If I had to choose one, it would probably be *The OASIS Guide*. However, I could not recommend either book to families outside the United States. There are so many subtle cultural differences, even down to the tests used, that a U.K. family would be confused.

Nor is either book the definitive in-

troduction to Asperger syndrome for parents. Both books treat the discovery that a child has Asperger syndrome rather like travel to a foreign country. The habits of the natives are treated as curious and intriguing. The reader is made to feel optimistic about managing in this new culture. But the humanity of persons with Asperger syndrome does not come across well; nor does the fact that people with Asperger syndrome have the same aspirations, ambitions, vanities, and hatreds as the rest of us. The optimistic detachment of these books is reassuring and attractive. But parents who are overwhelmed by the negativity and pain surrounding a child who is marginalized and frustrated will not find an echo here. For that, they would be better off reading Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*.

havior analysis and discrete trial teaching) and the TEACCH curriculum (Teaching and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children). Both methods are based on principles of behavior learning theory. Siegel explains these methods in a very accessible fashion while insightfully critiquing their strengths and weaknesses. She also examines several model programs, but, as she emphasizes throughout the book, no single method will work for every child. In the final chapter, "Putting the 'I' Back in IEP: Creating Individualized, Meaningful Life Learning Experiences," this message is reaffirmed, and a very effective conclusion is delivered that synthesizes the previous sections very well.

I highly recommend this book to any parent, teacher, or health professional, or any other person who has contact with children with an autism spectrum disorder. The author's earlier work, *The World of the Autistic Child*, was received very positively eight years ago, and this her latest work is likely to receive similarly strong praise.

## Helping Children With Autism Learn: A Guide to Treatment Approaches for Parents and Professionals

by Bryna Siegel; New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, 498 pages, \$30

Brian Isaacson, M.D.

As director of the autism clinic at the University of California, Los Angeles, Bryna Siegel, Ph.D., has undoubtedly worked with a rich tapestry of individuals with autistic spectrum disorders. Her extensive clinical experience is deftly communicated in *Helping Children With Autism Learn: A Guide to Treatment Approaches for Parents and Professionals*. In this book, Dr. Siegel guides teachers, therapists, and parents through the often confusing landscape of ideas about how to effectively enable children who have autism spectrum disorders to learn.

The first section of the book competently explores the known information about the etiology of autism spectrum disorders. It also expertly explains the need to examine specific learning disabilities that occur among children

with these disorders. Siegel establishes the basis for the methodology of examining specific symptoms of autism spectrum disorder and how to effectively treat them, which are discussed throughout the remainder of the book.

In the second section, specific disabilities among children with autism spectrum disorder are examined in detail, and treatment options are explained in clear, crisp language. The writing is accessible to a wide audience despite the discussion of potentially complex issues, such as theory of mind. Siegel anticipates potential problems with the techniques she describes and preemptively offers alternative solutions. She comprehensively examines all the most common deficits among children who have autism spectrum disorders and offers a wide variety of approaches to aid the child in overcoming these obstacles.

The final section presents an excellent discussion of pragmatic methods of helping children with autism to learn, such as ABA/DTT (applied be-

## Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Research Review for Practitioners

by Sally Ozonoff, Ph.D., Sally J. Rogers, Ph.D., and Robert L. Hendren, D.O.; Arlington, Virginia, American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., 2003, 296 pages, \$35.50 softcover

Fred R. Volkmar, M.D.

The growth in knowledge about the causes and treatments of autism and related conditions has been phenomenal in recent years. This book provides a succinct and helpful summary of current knowledge, highlighting areas in which knowledge is readily available and ar-

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