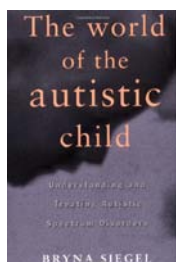


“MUST READ” BOOKS ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

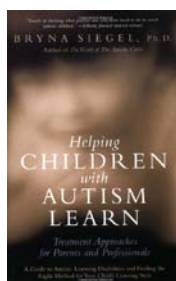
By Julie T. Steck, Ph.D. HSPP

Over the past 20 years our understanding of autism has grown a great deal. Public awareness of this significant developmental disorder has increased the identification of and programming for individuals affected by autism. However, families’ desperate searches for information and cures have also spawned a proliferation of misinformation and simple explanations to a complex problem. As I work with children and their families, I try to provide the most comprehensive, yet readable information, available to address this reality. In the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders the top three books I recommend are *The World of the Autistic Child*, *Helping Children with Autism Learn: Treatment Approaches for Parents and Professionals* and *The Complete Guide to Asperger’s Syndrome*. All three publications should be on the bookshelf of any professional who works with individuals with Autism or Asperger’s Disorder or any family with a child on the spectrum.



***The World of the Autistic Child.* Bryna Siegel. New York: Oxford Press (1996).**

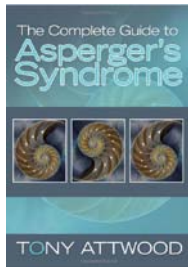
In the 1990’s those of us who worked with children with special needs began asking, “How broad is the spectrum of autism?” Dr. Bryna Siegel’s first book, *The World of the Autistic Child*, provided a wonderful overview of autism and how it affects children on this spectrum. The book helps readers understand the core symptoms of autism spectrum disorders. Siegel’s depth of knowledge and clear writing style truly helped me to see the world through the eyes of a child with autism. It is a book that can – and should – be re-read. As one’s knowledge and experience in the area increases, one’s understanding of what Dr. Siegel has to offer will also increase when absorbing her writing a second or third time. It is not a book with cookie-cutter solutions but one conveys the essence of autism.



***Helping Children with Autism Learn: Treatment Approaches for Parents and Professionals.* Bryna Siegel, Ph.D., Oxford University Press (2003).**

In *Helping Children with Autism Learn*, Dr. Siegel provides a practical guide to treating the learning differences of those with autism. She explains how these learning differences can affect those with autism in four dimensions of their lives: social, communication, leisure, and daily living skills. Dr. Siegel defines the atypical pattern of development in those with autism and explains how this developmental sequence skews learning. She also addresses how a child’s strengths can compensate for weaknesses caused by his/her autism.

The book concludes with a discussion of various intervention approaches including Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and the TEACCH curriculum. Her analysis of widely-used interventions is straightforward and cuts through the rhetoric of promises and sensationalism. Dr. Siegel concludes with a discussion of model programs with which she has worked. In a world of promises for parents of children of autism, Dr. Siegel offers an objective and experiential analysis of the issues that need to be addressed.



***The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome.* Tony Attwood. Jessica Kingsley Press (2008).**

Asperger's Disorder, also referred to as Asperger's Syndrome, did not become an accepted diagnosis in the United States until the 1990's. Our understanding of Asperger's Disorder as a form of autism improved our ability to identify and understand individuals who had long struggled socially, emotionally and academically. Dr. Attwood's first book was published in 1998 and served as a seminal handbook for all of us involved in the diagnosis and treatment of individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. His most recent book, *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*, expands on this earlier publication by providing an updated and more comprehensive understanding of this complex disorder.

Dr. Tony Attwood is a clinician who has worked with individuals with Asperger's Disorder for many years. He writes this book from the perspective of someone who knows and understands the syndrome well. His book provides impressive insight into the perspective of individuals with Asperger's Syndrome and the areas of their lives that are impacted. Dr. Attwood uses a lifespan approach to describe how the person is likely to adjust and respond in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. If you have a child or are working with someone with Asperger's Disorder, you will not truly understand the impact of the disorder and how to address areas of deficits without reading this book.

In an era in which we are overwhelmed with information that may or may not be reliable and research-based, these three books provide a foundation for understanding this complicated diagnosis. Parents and professionals are often willing to spend large sums of money on interventions about which we still have many questions. These books provide the "best bang for the buck" for readers who want to ground themselves in evidence-based knowledge that is presented for lay people and professionals alike.