

Autism with Severe Learning Difficulties (Second Edition)

By Dr. Rita Jordan

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In this wide ranging and comprehensive book, Jordan develops an understanding of autism and how it affects those who live with it, discussing the implications of a dual diagnosis of autism and general learning difficulties. She states that it is only through understanding of the condition and understanding of the individual that effective education can take place. Jordan emphasises the need for a principled approach in the teaching of individuals with autism and the importance of an approach that is designed to meet the specific needs of the individual. This premise is at the core of the book.

The author begins by discussing the importance of a base understanding of the nature of autism and how it interacts with cognitive impairment and each individual's personality and experiences. Jordan explains how autism and general learning difficulties may occur together; covering the triad of impairments and explaining how autism leads to a difference, not just a delay, in development. The book then progresses to outline how autism affects specific areas of an individual's development, including; Social Interaction, Speech, Language and Communication, Play Skills, Challenging Behaviours, Daily Living Skills and the transition to adult life. Each area is explained in detail and supplemented with many practical suggestions and examples.

The strength of the book lies in the natural progression it takes, working all the way through to the transition to adult life and additional family supports. It presents an extremely holistic approach to the education of people with autism. After the initial discussion of the implications of autism and dual diagnosis on an individual, Jordan addresses the key areas effecting the development of individuals with autism, supplementing theory with many practical examples. She writes about the dangers of teaching to a child's deficits at the expense of the broader picture. She presents holistic strategies to deal with challenging behaviour issues, urging the reader to look at the broader picture as opposed to the behaviour

in isolation. As a teacher, I found that she often makes points or practical suggestions that appear blindingly obvious on first reading, but can sometimes be overlooked. For example, in the chapter *Teaching Language and Communication*, she states the difference between 'speech' and 'communication' and how, in some cases, speech can even become a barrier to communication, if a child is speaking incessantly or using speech as a means of self-stimulation instead of communicating meaningfully. The final chapters of the book focus on the transition towards adult life, covering daily living skills and also including support for family members.

Overall, the book offers an extremely extensive overview of autism and the challenges to education and development posed by a dual diagnosis. It is user friendly, easy to read and informative. From a teacher's perspective, it offers many practical examples and analogies to supplement the theory and is an extremely useful guide to have on hand.

AUTISM WITH SEVERE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (SECOND EDITION) by Dr. Rita Jordan, is published by Souvenir Press, London, 2013 and costs Stg£15.00

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