

Evidence-Based Practices may not have been a book I would have read were it not handed to me for review, I am actually delighted that I have read it and welcome the challenge of re-assessing my own thoughts in relation to the teaching of writing in light of these insights.

INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT FOR STRUGGLING WRITERS: EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES edited by Gary A. Troia is published by The Guilford Press, New York, 2009, and is available from Taylor and Francis Group, www.tandf.co.uk and costs Stg£33.00.

Positive Behaviour Strategies to Support Children and Young People with Autism

By Martin Hanbury

Reviewed by TOM DELANEY, a teacher of a special class for pupils with autism at St. Paul's Special School, Beaumont, Dublin.

The intended purpose of this book, *Positive Behaviour Strategies to Support Children and Young People with Autism*, purported by the Author Martin Hanbury, is to share the good practice in behaviour support which has emerged in the field of autism over recent years. Martin Hanbury himself brings a wealth of experience, having worked with people with autism for over twenty years in a variety of hands-on roles ranging from carer to teacher, to his current position as a regional tutor on the University of Birmingham's *Webautism* programme. My initial reaction to the title of the book was a positive one as it is not only aimed at supporting children but also young people with autism, an area for which it is often difficult to find research and literature. On a practical level the book is extremely accessible, divided into six chapters, and as a whole the book is characterised by an excellent holistic approach to positive behaviour strategies.

Chapter 1 *Autism and Challenging Behaviour* provides a short overview of current theoretical understandings of autism, highlighting the triad of impairments, theory of mind, central coherence, executive function and sensory integration difficulties as critical areas in which a person with autism experiences significant difficulties.

It provides an extremely interesting insight into challenging behaviour and our understanding of it, highlighting how interpretation of challenging behaviour is often highly subjective. Chapter 1 looks at the association between challenging behaviour and autism, stating that challenging behaviour amongst people with autism is driven by their needs, and more specifically driven by difficulties experienced in each of the critical areas mentioned above.

Chapter 2 *Understanding Behaviour Support* begins by making a clear and essential distinction between the current notion of behaviour support and traditional approach of behaviour management. Behaviour management looks simply to contain a person's behaviour while behaviour support attempts to enhance a person's range of behaviour choices. This chapter further addresses behaviour as needs driven, subsequently grouping these needs into four broad categories (attention, tangible, escape and sensory). In grouping needs it is intended to try to identify a communicative intent in the behaviour. Hanbury is quick to outline how behaviour patterns are often multi-functional and that the function of behaviour can shift over time. This chapter also provides an online reference to download a motivation assessment scale form to support needs analysis.

Based on the background provided by Chapters 1 and 2, Chapter 3 *Developing Proactive Strategies* provides an excellent holistic approach to developing behaviour support strategies. The chapter highlights how proactive strategies are most effective when arousal among people with autism is low. It provides extremely detailed, if sometimes a little overly complex, graphs mapping out arousal levels. However, it does supply observation sheets for measuring a person's arousal levels during the day. The approach to proactive strategies focuses on both long-term responses and shorter term, day-to-day, incident specific strategies, including avoidance, calming techniques, distraction and options. Hanbury states how the optimum support for people with autism and challenging behaviour is one which considers an integrated approach in which "short term measures and long term solutions are strategically combined" (p. 47).

Chapter 4 *Developing Our Role in Behaviour Support* challenges us to examine our role in, and perceptions towards, challenging behaviours. Hanbury prompts us to question our motives, prejudices and aspirations when developing proactive strategies, and to look at our notions of 'normality'. An excellent tool provided in this chapter is the questionnaire to be filled out by those working with people with autism. It also asks us to reflect on our own skills and attributes we bring to supporting people with challenging behaviours and to reflect on these attributes

honestly and self-analytically to identify our strengths and development needs. Beyond the need for individual self reflection, the need for developing organisations is explored, looking at the importance of consistent good practice, training and professional development, pastoral care and inter-organisational collaboration.

Chapter 5 *Developing the Learning Environment* presents an excellent appraisal of the conditions required in order to develop a safe and comfortable learning environment for people with autism. Hanbury claims that optimum learning conditions can be achieved by developing environments which are safe, healthy and calm, where effective learning content is relevant and motivating, and where these preconditions are accompanied by predictability and consistency from the perspective of the individual with autism. Again, this chapter supplies relevant risk assessment checklists and calm environment predictor checklists, which are both extremely useable and extremely practical.

The concluding chapter, *Supporting Others* outlines the importance of reciprocal relationships with an emphasis on working supportively and collaboratively. These relationships exist through supporting families, family-family support and family-practitioner support. This chapter concludes with a nine-session *Foundation Training Plan*, aimed at establishing an understanding of the features of autism and the mechanisms that drive challenging behaviour. The training plan is broken into nine, one hour sessions, and provides sheets and handouts that can be photo-copied, and could be extremely useful for schools and organisations alike.

All in all, this book provides an excellent resource for anybody who has any input into the lives of people with autism. It offers an extremely accessible, holistic and humanistic approach to positive behaviour strategies. The needs of the person with autism are central to all aspects of the book. It provides a balanced framework to approach positive, proactive behaviour strategies as well as asking those who work with people with autism to reflect on their own practices.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM by Martin Hanbury is published by SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007 and costs Stg£17.99.

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