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Family & Relationships

A Beginner's Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders: Essential Information for Parents and Professionals

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Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) blankets a range of impairments in specific areas of behavior, and though one person in every one hundred people may have ASD, no two people share the same presentation. Paul G. Taylor works as a consultant paediatrician in a New Zealand regional general hospital. Specializing in ASD, he works directly with young people with the disorder, their families, and schools. He has been addressing audiences about the disorder for the past twelve years. His concise guide details ASD and provides practical strategies for coping with a child impaired by ASD. As an expert in the field, he possesses personal opinions but refrains from forcing them upon the reader. After suggesting solutions for the varying issues that people with ASD combat, he empowers the reader to make the final decision. Since the guide serves as a starting point for ASD education, Taylor conveniently includes additional references throughout the text.

Divided into two parts–Part I ASD: The Facts and Part II ASD: What Can We Do About It?–the book dedicates an equal portion of pages to each. Part I consists of seven chapters which detail the disorder and urge the reader to practice empathy when dealing with someone with ASD. Taylor succeeds in diluting the psychological jargon into terms and metaphors that any reader can comprehend. Advising that ASD is a “hard-wired difference in thinking patterns,” Taylor compares this variance to computers. Apple computers cannot run Windows programs and vice-versa. He also instructs the reader to abandon “neurotypical” thoughts in order to gain perspective on the thought processes and responses of people with the disorder. Part II builds from the first section’s foundation of symptoms and points of struggle and breaks down coping strategies in thirty shorter chapters. Examples of people with ASD and their individual traits are peppered among all chapters, adding intriguing selections of personal struggle.

Taylor uses bullets sparingly but appropriately. His style of slipping in and out of

different perspectives is initially jarring, however his caveat in the introduction prepares the reader for his unique style. While the mixture of objective and subjective tones makes for an easy read, this publication would benefit from the services of a stricter editor. Teachers, parents, and others associated with someone with ASD will undoubtedly value this guide. Those with ASD will, in turn, profit from their community understanding their challenges, thus aiding in stress, aggression, and transition management.

Lauren Lloyd