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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ JUVENILE NONFICTION

Caring for Myself

Christy Gast
Jane Krug
Kotoe Laackman, photographer
Jessica Kingsley Publishers (Nov 15, 2007)
Unknown $19.95 (96pp)
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Mastering the daily habits of personal care are challenging for all young children, but brushing teeth and hand washing can be real stumbling blocks for children suffering from various forms of autism. *Caring for Myself*, a realistic resource book, specifically targets an audience of parents and teachers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and is designed to help acquaint children with the activities they will encounter on a regular basis, including visits to the doctor. “Cute as can be” children are featured in colorful, real-life photographs, eagerly and cooperatively modeling the routines of day-to-day life.

Author Gast is a veteran educator with the Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding, as a well as the mother of a son with Asperger’s Syndrome. She is also co-author of the *Social Stories Quarterly*, a publication which promotes social understanding between those with ASD and others who interact with them. Jane Krug, a speech-language therapist, has specialized in educating ASD children for nearly ten years.

The introduction notes the special features developed by the authors to increase the book’s effectiveness, such as personalizing pages with family photos of the child in his routine. Text can be added too for reinforcement through repetition. Each of the five sections includes an introductory page explaining the featured activity; the Who, What, Where, When, How and Why of hand washing, for example. Instructions are clearly described to alleviate the autistic child’s anxiety with an unfamiliar environment. Caring adults appear in supporting roles, while they accompany the children to the barber shop, or escort the children to the exam room at the doctor’s office. “Sometimes little pieces of hair tickle my neck or arms. The stylist will get them off so I feel better,” explains the bold text, showing a blonde-haired little boy sitting in a stylist’s chair with a broad smile on his face. A page for caregivers brings each section to a conclusion, offering helpful suggestions for using the book with children, such as the use of a sticker-reward chart for teeth brushing.

While *Caring For Myself* targets the autistic, many parents would welcome its message for all children.
AMY FALBERG (October 9, 2007)

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