

Embracing Asperger's: A Primer for Parents and Professionals

Richard Bromfield

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Embracing Asperger's is an easy-to-read guide for parents, teachers, and caregivers who routinely interact with children with Asperger's, a complex social disorder that is on the autism spectrum. Engaging in social interaction with peers and expressing emotions elude many children with Asperger's.

Author Richard Bromfield is a psychologist with more than thirty years experience treating children with Asperger's; this primer is a compendium of his observations and suggestions for how to, as the title says, embrace the affected child.

In each of the concise seventeen chapters, Bromfield gives real-life examples of children he has treated and discusses such topics as facilitating communication, feeding creativity, promoting friendship, and quelling anxiety; he devotes a special chapter to girls with Asperger's. In informative, concise, bullet-point format, Bromfield offers practical advice.

Bromfield delves into the minds of children with Asperger's, enlightening the reader as to how to nurture, honor, and understand them. He proposes an approach borne of patience, and writes in a straightforward manner.

For example, in the chapter entitled "Giving and Nurturing Empathy," Bromfield writes, "Don't forget to smell the garbage. It is pretty easy to empathize with hearts and flowers ... Remember, the child with Asperger's goes through life so alone with what she feels and with what no one else seems to be able to comprehend and understand. To have that stuff seen, affirmed, and empathized with cannot help but feel to be a supremely loving moment of warmth, closeness, and gratitude for such a child."

The author reminds the reader of the unique and special qualities of children with Asperger's, and their dire need to be nurtured and understood. Contrary to popular belief, he points out, these children crave friendships and social interaction, but ironically that is the thing that eludes them the most.

Perhaps the most important lesson to be garnered from the book is Bromfield's view that all children with Asperger's need to be loved and honored to the same extent as neurotypical children. And that they are not so unusual, after all. "Check out the world. High tech, business, science and engineering are full of people with Asperger's and so are all of our universities and graduate schools, including those in medicine, psychology, and the arts. Libraries, accounting firms, and banks: You name it, and Asperger's is there, producing and creating for all of our benefit. It does imply a range of normalcy, doesn't it?"

HILARY DANINHIRSCH (July 6, 2011)

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