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Understanding Facial Recognition Difficulties in Children: Prosopagnosia Management Strategies for Parents and Professionals

Nancy L. Mindick
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Imagine not being able to recognize your friends, your teacher, or your parents with only a glance. Some people, children and adults alike, lack the ability to use faces as identifying features, a condition called prosopagnosia. These people suffer from face-blindness and must rely on other characteristics, such as tone of voice, hairstyle, or clothing to identify even the people closest to them.

Educator Nancy L. Mindick, who also suffers from prosopagnosia, attempts to fill an information hole with her important book, *Understanding Facial Recognition Difficulties in Children*. While prosopagnosia affects very few people, those few lives can be greatly altered for the better by following the fairly simple techniques Mindick suggests for both classrooms and homes. For instance, a classroom buddy system can provide a prosopagnosic student with a subtle way of identifying other people in the room, and can lessen the sense of isolation that some children may feel. Other techniques, such as categorizing and labeling kids at different lunch tables by interests–comic books, for instance–can make an intimidating experience much more comfortable for a child who has difficulty recognizing his or her friends in the cafeteria.

Mindick also suggests ways parents can decrease the potential for hurt feelings among friends and even provides language samples to use with children and adults to explain a prosopagnosic's condition. As one who suffers from the disorder she's writing about, Mindick has obvious insight into the emotions that go along with the condition and is brave enough to use her own history as a guide in her writing. "I believe that I speak for many prosopagnosics when I say that being in a school in which students wear uniforms is a situation that the child should not have to confront." Readers will feel confident receiving advice from someone willing to share her personal experience and is also educated about the subject.

It's also evident that Mindick has spent countless hours studying her condition. She

offers lucid explanations of the science behind face blindness and explores the differences between developmental prosopagnosia, which starts in childhood, and situational, which occurs as a result of brain injury or illness. Perhaps most importantly, she encourages celebrating the individual talents and personal successes of any person learning to live with prosopagnosia.

People suffering from its effects will welcome this accessible, concise, practical book.

Andi Diehn