

Recommended Consumer Books on Autism

Compiled by Pamela Hargwood, MLIS. UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Library of the Health Sciences, New Brunswick, NJ

Autism is a complex developmental disability characterized by impaired social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication problems and unusual, repetitive or severely limited activities and interests. Since people with autism can have different features or symptoms, health care providers think of autism as a spectrum disorder.

The following is a list of recommended consumer health books on autism. This list represents a small portion of the books out there dealing with the subject. In an effort to keep the list manageable, I chose books published in 2000 or later and looked at autism book collections from various libraries and autism support groups.

Cohen, Shirley. **Targeting autism: what we know, don't know, and can do to help young children with autism spectrum disorders/3rd ed.** Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006. 241 pages. ISBN-13: 9780520248380

An easy to read book targeted for parents new to the world of autism. This book provides a comprehensive, impartial analysis of research findings and treatment options. It is a good resource to begin with when considering the type of help for your autistic child.

Exkorn, Karen Siff and Volkmar, Fred R. **The autism sourcebook: everything you need to know about diagnosis, treatment, coping and healing.** New York: Collins Living, 2006. 416 pages. ISBN-13: 9780060859756

This comprehensive book covers the topics of diagnosis, treatment, the rights of the child in the school system, marital and family stress and making the stigma of autism a thing of the past. There is also extensive supplemental material including internet resources, recommended readings, a list of the top autism organizations worldwide, the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers, and the Diagnostic Criteria for the Five Pervasive Developmental Disorders.

Gillberg, Christopher and Coleman-Gillberg, Mary. **Biology of the Autistic Syndromes.** London: MacKeith Press, 2000. 340 pages. ISBN-13: 9781898683223

Even though this book is primarily written for physicians, it is so clearly written, there are parts that a lay person could understand. The focus of this book is on the neurobiology of autism. It is a comprehensive reference that covers both current and past research.

Glasberg, Beth A. **Functional behavior assessment for people with autism: making sense of seemingly senseless behavior.** Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, 2006. 152 pages. ISBN: 1890627585

This book describes functional behavior assessment (FBA), a strategy that can be used by parents or professionals to identify factors that contribute to problem behavior such as noncompliance, aggression, and repetitive actions that can interfere with daily life. The book provides step by step explanations, forms and case studies.

Hamilton, Lynn. **Facing autism: giving parents reasons for hope and guidance for help.** Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2000. 366 pages. ISBN: 1578562627

This book, written by a mother of a child with autism, details her experience using intensive Applied Behavior Analysis therapy with very good results. There is a resource list that includes contact information at the end of each section.

Handleman, Jan S. and Harris, Sandra L. **School-age education programs for children with autism.** Austin, Texas: PRO-ED, 2006. 327 pages. ISBN: 141640130X

This book focuses on programs designed for children who continue to need some kind of special services either in public schools or a specialized program. The book describes a variety of specific programs for school-aged children with autism.

Harris, Sandra and Weiss, Mary Jane. **Right from the start: behavioral intervention for young children with autism.** Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, 2007. 156 pages. ISBN-13: 9781890627805

Written by the directors of the Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center at Rutgers University, this book provides an excellent overview of early behavioral intervention for young children with autism. The authors are strong advocates of this type of program but admit it does not work for all children. This book helps parents evaluate public school programs and discusses the pros and cons of home based versus center based programs.

Jacobson, John, Foxx, Richard and Mulick, James. **Controversial therapies for developmental disabilities: fad, fashion and science in professional practice.** Mahwah, NJ: L.Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 505 pages. ISBN-13: 9780805841916

This book takes an objective view on current “quick fix” and “miracle” treatments seen in developmental disabilities, specifically in autism. The editors describe how to determine whether or not a treatment suggested for your child is based in science or not. They also discuss what specific goals from therapies should be expected and not the vague improvements usually promised.

Klin, Ami; Volkmar, Fred; and Sparrow, Sara. **Asperger syndrome.** New York: Guilford Press, 2000. 489 pages. ISBN: 1572305347

This book is a compilation of research from 27 preeminent scholars and practitioners in the field of autism. It discusses what is currently known about Asperger syndrome and the direction of new research being done in the field. The book examines the effect of this syndrome on an individual’s social, communication, and behavioral development and also discusses the challenges of having Asperger’s. At the end of the book are several essays by parents talking about life with a child with Asperger syndrome.

Koegel, Lynn K, and LaZebnik, Claire Scovell. **Overcoming autism.** New York: Penguin Group, 2005. 336 pages. ISBN-13: 9780143034681

Written by both a clinician and a mother whose son has autism, this book discusses ways to improve the symptoms of autism. The authors suggest techniques such as behavior analysis, positive modeling and incentives to help with various autistic behavior such as disruptiveness, silence, meltdowns, etc.

Mayerson, Gary. **How to compromise with your school district without compromising your child: a practical field guide for parents of children with developmental disorders and learning disabilities.** New York: DRL Books, 2004. 140 pages. ISBN: 0966526686

A clearly written book that brings parents up to speed on ways educational bureaucracies work or don’t work for special needs children. The book discusses how to advocate for your child and there are sections on how to prepare for an individualized educational program (IEP) meeting and what to do when children don’t get the services they need.

McClannahan, Lynn, Krantz, Patricia and Harris, Sandra. **Teaching conversation to children with autism: scripts and script fading.** Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, 2005. 160 pages. ISBN-13: 9781890627324

The authors of this book explain scripts and how they can be used to help children learn to initiate conversation. The book gives clear instructions and supports various levels of ability.

Ozonoff, Sally. **A parent's guide to Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism: how to meet the challenges and help your child thrive.** New York: Guilford Press, 2002. 278 pages. ISBN-13: 97815723053117

Written by medical professionals, this book is a comprehensive, straightforward and informative guide about Asperger syndrome. The book begins with basic information and the history of Asperger's and then goes on to discuss what happens during the diagnostic process and living with Asperger's and high-functioning autism. Offers help for children as well as adults.

Powers, Michael. **Children with autism: a parent's guide.** Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, 2000. 427 pages. ISBN: 1890627046

An updated and expanded edition, this book covers various topics including daily and family life, early intervention, educational programs, legal rights and advocacy, and adults with autism.

Robledo, S. Jhoanna and Ham-Kucharski, Dawn. **The autism book: answers to your most pressing questions.** New York, NY: Avery Publishing Group, 2005. 208 pages. ISBN-13: 9781583332245

A comprehensive introductory manual that discusses the causes, diagnosis and treatment of autism, this book utilizes a question and answer format. There is also a section dealing with adults with autism and a comprehensive resource list at the back of the book. This book also addresses the emotional issues and worries that parents of autistic children might have.

Schreibman, Laura Ellen. **The science and fiction of autism.** Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005. 304 pages. ISBN:0674019318

Dr. Schreibman explains the different controversies surrounding autism causes and treatments and looks at each of them scientifically. Any parent or lay person interested in autism would find this book useful. It is well written and covers many issues that would be of concern to parents of an autistic child. There is a strong bias towards behavioral therapy rather than biomedical or alternative treatments.

Sicile-Kira, Chantal. **Autism spectrum disorders: the complete guide to understanding autism, Asperger's syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder, and other ASDs.** New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 2004. 360 pages. ISBN: 0399530479

This book covers many topics including education, diagnosis, treatments, family life etc., but does not go into enough detail in most of these areas. There are a few strong chapters, in particular, the one on education which discusses how to get through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting.

Simmons, Karen L. **The official autism 101 manual.** Seattle, WA: Autism Today, 2006. 262 pages. ISBN-13: 9780972468282

This book covers the complete range of approaches, perspectives and methods dealing with autism. It is a compilation from 44 contributors. All the information you need is in one book.

Winter, Judy. **Breakthrough parenting for children with special needs: raising the bar of expectations.** San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006. 258 pages. ISBN: 0787980811

A book written by a parent whose child had cerebral palsy, this book helps parents set higher goals for their special needs children by focusing on ability rather than disability. The book includes inspiring success stories, specific resources and motivational, how-to parent-tested strategies. Also included are specific guidelines for working with professionals, understanding the law and inclusion and planning for the future.

Wiseman, Nancy and Painter-Koffsky, Kim. **Could it be autism?: a parent's guide to the first signs and next steps.** New York: Broadway Books, 2007. 272 pages. ISBN-13: 9780767919739

This book is an important resource for parents confronting the possibility of an autism diagnosis with their child. As a mother with a child of autism, Wiseman combines both her own experiences plus the latest research to offer parents advice on topics such as screening tests and creating appropriate treatment plans.