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Nason's "The autism discussion page: On stress, anxiety, shutdowns, and meltdowns" (book review)

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Book Reviews



The autism discussion page: On stress, anxiety, shutdowns, and meltdowns. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 328 pp. \$17.49. ISBN 9781785928048

Written by a mental health professional who specializes in autism, this book, along with two others in the series, were inspired by the author's Autism Discussion Page hosted and moderated for over 175,000 members on Facebook. Structured like a textbook, it gives practical advice for any teachers or parents looking for strategies to help them relate to and help autistic children and adults thrive. In particular, content focuses on strategies for dealing with shutdowns, meltdowns, and anxiety resulting from emotional, sensory, and social overload, which are common experiences for those on the autism spectrum.

Rather than trying to change those with neurodevelopmental disabilities, Nason stresses the need to welcome and adapt to autistic people's processing differences. Each chapter outlines ways to understand and support each child helping them feel safe, accepted, and competent. Information processing differences explain why the world is so overwhelming for people on the spectrum. Respecting each individual's wiring enables unique overwhelming factors to be considered and monitored. Once the sources of stress and anxiety are recognized, then coping strategies can be employed to help prevent shutdowns and meltdowns. Sensory and social challenges are explored alongside what it is like to live with executive dysfunction. Mostly, it focuses on encouraging others to help those with autism maintain their identity while learning to function well in society.

At times it comes across repetitive, yet there are many helpful tips provided throughout. For example, each individual profile influences what type of sensory diet should be maintained. When stressors and challenges are considered, specific accommodations can be made. Then, behavior indicators can determine a course of action to take when a child is being compromised in his or her ability to operate well. Specific tools include utilizing declarative vs. imperative language, previewing events, collaborative problem solving (CPS), and employing calming strategies such as self-stimulation, proprioception, or a familiar constant. Providing periodic breaks, a safe area, or an escape route, trying corrective therapies, being a social interpreter, conducting peer training, teaching automatic habits, using visual timers and organizers, having a Plan B, etc. are all ways to help those with autism thrive as themselves.

While the book is not theological or academic in nature, it achieves its purpose in providing proactive and positive strategies for helping those with autism exist in a way that respects their differences and minimizes unrealistic expectations placed on them. This way they can manage any difficulties they may encounter. Nor is it comprehensive, rather it focuses on key topics while expanding upon the content of its predecessor, *The Autism Discussion Page on the Core Challenges in Autism*. There are no footnotes, although at the end of the book a short list of references is provided. It could be a good addition for a school library, and referenced by teachers or parents as needed.

Reviewer

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