

Understanding Autism by Prof Katrina Williams & Prof Jacqueline Roberts

5 stars

An excellent book to help parents coping with an autistic child

I think I should explain what you will learn in this little book, and yes, it is little, which I think helped me because it didn't overwhelm me with hundreds of pages. There is enough in each chapter, dealing with subjects like What is autism? Meet individuals with autism. Assessment and diagnosis and the one that I like the most; Looking after yourself. At the end of each chapter the authors have added something which is HUGELY important, RESOURCES, giving you, the reader, an opportunity to carry out further studies raised in the chapter. One I think that anyone with an autistic child would love the answer to; Is there a cure for autism? (Sadly, not yet, however, there are some very interesting ideas on the web).

Maybe my reading this book was a bit like "closing the stable door after the horse has bolted" because in my situation, my son was only diagnosed autistic after the age of forty and yet, reading this book has helped me sort out a lot of my "hang-ups" about how I've both helped and hindered my profoundly deaf, autistic son.

Putting my past behind me - because it's the past and no good is going to come from saying "if only" - what this book has really taught me is how far research into autism has moved from where it was forty years ago. Professionals are far better qualified to see the whole child now. Assessments have moved on to include so many more tools that help those involved make the right assessment. An example; videoing the child in his own home or interacting with other children.

Coping with an autistic child is not a walk in the park - in fact using that as an example - it can be a terrifying experience! This reminds me of two instances when my son was a toddler. One, being terrified when he saw (for the first time), washing going around in a washing machine. I had to spend hours encouraging him to watch it. Another was holding him (in my arms) in the sea again, screaming, until he realised that the sea was quite fun. (Dare I mention these two events? Yes! I most probably broke every rule on how to introduce an autistic child to these two things, but please remember we're talking forty odd years ago!)

Are there things I wish I could go back and change - especially after reading this book? Yes! Siblings in families with an autistic child always come second. With the teaching and help that's now available, I might have managed to give more time to my daughter. I might have saved a lot of stress in my own life and marriage if I'd known then what I've recently learnt.

Am I upset that books and research like this weren't available for me years ago? Absolutely! Instead of muddling through, I would have had more resources to help. But I must add that, looking back, I'm proud of how I did cope but even prouder that my son not only survived his chaotic muddling upbringing and schooling but in spite of it all, is a very remarkable person, who is a huge example of someone with disabilities who has not only succeeded but has so much to offer this crazy world.

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Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.