

BOOK REVIEW

SEEING THROUGH NEW EYES: Changing the Lives of Children with Autism, Asperger Syn- drome and Other Developmen- tal Disabilities through Vision Therapy

Author: Melvin Kaplan OD.

Jessica Kingsley Publishers:
Philadelphia, 2006.
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The most recent report produced by the Center for Disease Control estimates the incidence of those person's diagnosed as being within the autism spectrum to be approximately one out of 150 births. In contrast, in the 1970s, this rate was more akin to 5-10 in 10,000. Arguments aside as to the cause and whether this increase is truly occurring, these patients are appearing in optometric offices across the country. Dr. Melvin Kaplan, the author and the Director of the Center for Visual Management in New York has created an effective book to educate and assist others who wish to treat those who suffer from autism and other developmental disabilities.

The author, a proponent of the use of prism or ambient lenses, has put together a thought provoking and well organized product. Often books of this nature lack actual case examples, but the opposite is true in this case. In almost every chapter there are several short case write-ups that help illustrate the points that are being made. While many are impressive and

create a sense of joy for the patient, I was left longing for more details: how was the treatment specifically chosen for some of these patients? I missed the "Aha" moment that many of these patients experienced during therapy.

The book is divided into three sections:

- 1) Understanding visual dysfunction and the role of prism lenses and vision therapy,
- 2) The Kaplan Nonverbal Battery Test: testing and interpretation of results, and
- 3) Planning a visual management program. This sequence lends itself to a building of the reader's knowledge level and flows very nicely.

The first section of the book is essentially an introduction to the connection between vision and the behaviors in question. A discussion on ambient lenses and their potential use in vision therapy (VT) is included. This information allows the reader to better understand the direction that the author takes in later chapters.

The second section familiarizes the reader with the Kaplan Nonverbal Battery Test that the author developed. The test consists of nine tasks not ordinarily performed by optometrists; these include seated and standing pursuits and ball play. Cases are presented that illustrate the testing as well as analysis of the results.

The final section brings the book full circle by introducing an alternative vision therapy philosophy for working with various patient types, including those with strabismus, orientation and spatial organization issues. Many of the VT techniques that are referenced are described in great detail. Case presentations and outcomes are provided as a means to demonstrate Dr. Kaplan's success using these procedures.

Several other topics covered in this section include the relationship between breathing and vision, as well as a primer on the Van Orden (VO) star. In discussing this procedure, the author gives insight into what is being tested, possible inter-

pretations and the use of different prism orientations in therapy, depending on the findings. Given the fact that many of today's optometrists get only a cursory introduction to this procedure, this is a very nice addition to the book.

This book is a must read for any doctor who wishes to treat and/or perform VT on those with autism or developmental disabilities. It is well organized and has a logical flow. Dr. Kaplan succeeds in demystifying the use of prism with this population and leaves the reader wanting to know more; however, it would have been quite beneficial to have greater detail in some of the case presentations. Dr. Kaplan states that the only way to truly understand what it takes to work with prism and/or those with autism is to begin to work with this special population. If you chose to incorporate individuals on the autism spectrum in your practice, this book will be a good resource.

Seeing Through New Eyes is available from OEP. See Product News on page 163.