

Children's Anxiety: A Contextual Approach

Peter Appleton (ed.)

Routledge

2008, 179pp

Paperback £24.99

ISBN 978-0-415-45944-0

In this traditional text Peter Appleton usefully draws out important distinctions between working with adults and working with children. He begins with a quote from the second volume of Bowlby's (1973) work on attachment and loss, which sets the scene for the text. This well-presented exploration of children's anxiety, which follows the recent trend within clinical approaches, pulls together experimental research and recent developments in the application of attachment theory.

A well-constructed preface focuses this book towards a consideration of anxiety, which acknowledges multiple risk and resilience factors and maintains a stance of the importance of examining anxiety, as it presents itself in context. The developmental framework for children's anxiety, which has ten key themes and is presented in part 1, draws together a number of important and well-researched factors, which are considered systematically.

This is not a book that I could pick up and read from the beginning to the end, but a text which draws on numerous references. For example, Chapter 1 alone has 100 references, to inform the reader of recent research in the developmental understanding of childhood anxiety. The vast topic is covered in Part 2 of this book, Chapters 4 to 12, in a series of case studies. These studies attempt an examination of the contextual nature of anxiety exhibited in childhood.

Part 2 is presented by a good range of contributors, with extensive clinical experience, using a number of psychological approaches, including cognitive, systemic, social constructionist and psychodynamic approaches, including a focus on attachment. The book comes into its own in this section as it explores working with children exhibiting anxiety, whose feelings of anxiety trigger a range of very different behaviours. The case studies illustrate the importance of acknowledging and working with those in relationships with the children from a number of different theoretical perspectives. Each chapter in this section draws on the professional practice of a clinician or clinicians working in different services.

I found that the strength of Part 2 of the book lies in the apparent honesty of the writing. This writing reflects on the theory that practitioners have drawn upon and also the com-

plexity of the lives of those with whom they work. This results in shared lives, as the practitioners, children and families come together in applying theory from which all appear to learn and grow. Hence I found this section allowed an emphasis on relationships; a theme that I felt emerged from the main body of the work. Relationships that were shaped by an understanding of various theories informing practice help to facilitate sensitive skilled encounters.

The case studies have the potential to act as reflective discussion points to support the development of practice and offer a useful guide for those who work therapeutically with children and families.

Tony Williams

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Reference

BOWLBY, J. (1973) *Attachment and Loss*, vol. II, *Separation*. New York: Basic Books.

Coordinating Special Educational Needs: A Guide for the Early Years

Damien Fitzgerald

Continuum International Publishing Group

2007, 125pp

Paperback £9.99

ISBN 978-0-8264-8476-5

This is another book from the special educational needs in the Early Years series; one in which Damien Fitzgerald provides an overview of the special needs process and includes helpful hints and strategies for coordinating the different aspects of special needs within early years settings.

Part 1 of the book highlights that there has been an increasing level of recognition and support for children with special educational needs in recent years. Outlined are the significant changes in legislation which have underpinned the development of support for children with learning difficulties across the range of educational provision. There is an emphasis on the importance of a partnership with parents and children, and between early years settings, schools, the local authority and other agencies as key factors in supporting effective service delivery to children with special educational needs and their families.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus in depth on the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) and outlines how that role has developed as legislation and guidance have changed. Chapter 2 focuses on legislation and guidance

which has changed over time. Highlighted is the fact that with the introduction of the Children Act (2004) an emphasis is now being placed on the expectation of services to work in partnership, with the view to enhancing the development of child and family services.

A key message through Chapters 3 and 4 outlines the importance of working in partnership with parents and how this can be achieved successfully. It also emphasises the benefits of children's participation in promoting inclusion. Children need to feel valued and included and have the opportunity to fully participate. The strategies and approaches outlined in this chapter provide a sound basis for practitioners to enhance the levels of participation among children.

Part 2 of the book focuses on the process and the procedures that SENCos may be involved in and offers suggestions to support and develop effective practice to achieve the successful co-ordination of special educational needs in the early years setting. There is specific guidance regarding: Special Needs Policy, Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), effective administration systems and multi-disciplinary working and supporting transitions.

This book will be handy to have on a shelf where it is easy to be dipped into as and when required. The book is aimed at SENCos, early years practitioners and their managers and tutors on early years courses. The book will also be of interest to students who work with children and those hoping to move into a SENCo role in the future. Particularly useful throughout the book are the case studies which have been used to illustrate some of the issues raised; points for reflection or discussion; self assessment exercises; and action points to encourage the gathering of information or resources to help develop skills in supporting children with special educational needs. There is a list of references and further reading at the end of the book for those who wish to extend their knowledge and understanding of children with special educational needs.

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The Dyscalculia Toolkit: Supporting Learning Difficulties in Maths

Ronit Bird

Paul Chapman Publishing, Sage Publications
2007, 138pp.
Paperback + CD-ROM £29.99
ISBN 978-1-4129-4765-7

This is, as its title suggests, a kit of strategies and activities designed for those working with pupils struggling with maths. It aims to support those children who fail to 'get' maths, using a structured set of practical tasks and games to encourage understanding of the basic mathematical principles. Any child could be taught using these methods, but the child with dyscalculia would particularly benefit from

the practical approach and the opportunity to reinforce and build on the principles already learned.

The author has developed a range of activities and games for classroom use, which are presented in four sections, covering early number work (numbers to ten), basic calculation with numbers above ten, place value and times tables, multiplication and division. Each of the sections contains a helpful overview, explaining how understanding of that topic is built, how it relates to the other topics and maths in general, the problems this may present to the child with dyscalculia and the strategies that can help. There follows a range of activities, each with a clear learning aim, explanation and teaching tips; and also a range of maths games which reinforce the concepts taught in the activities. The accompanying CD-ROM contains printable resources for the activities and games; and also an electronic version of the text which allows particular instructions or sections to be easily printed off. There is also a copy of a leaflet originally written for parents explaining the uses of practical maths teaching tools such as Cuisenaire rods.

The activities are mainly designed for primary age, but are equally applicable to Key Stage 3 students. They could be used as mainstream teaching tools, supplementary activities or in a withdrawal session for regular, structured input to reinforce understanding of mathematical concepts. The clear instructions and helpful tips allow the activities and games to be delivered by a teacher, teaching assistant or parent. I was pleased that the author encourages the use of practical material by the children (not as demonstration by the adults). The sustained practical experience allows children to use logic and deduction to build understanding, not just learn by rote.

The activities are presented in a well-structured pattern, but are not necessarily to be worked through in strict order. Each one explains clearly how it builds on prior knowledge, so the adult can find the appropriate activity for a child who is 'stuck' at a particular point. These are not add-ons for the end of a lesson; each is an effective learning activity in itself.

The style and layout are clear and accessible; distinctly practical but with sufficient introduction and explanation to clarify the purpose of the activities, which I found enormously helpful. The concepts a child must grasp in order to build a functional understanding of number are clearly explicated and contextualised. Reading this book would put anyone working with children with dyscalculia in a stronger position to understand the barriers they face and how they can be overcome.

An excellent resource for anyone teaching maths, from early years to secondary intervention work.

Helen Causier
Assistant Team Leader in Learning Support in a Community College

**Children and Bullying: How Parents and Educators
Can Reduce Bullying at School**

Ken Rigby

Blackwell Publishing

2008, 232pp

Paperback £14.99

ISBN 978-1-4051-6254-8

One might be forgiven for wondering what new perspectives the author of seven previous books on the topic of bullying might find on the subject. I did not have to search for long to find the answer. It is in the introduction to Ken Rigby's latest paperback. It is, we are told, a book aimed more at parents than previous books have been. But it is a book for parents that draws extensively on research as well as being a practical manual that offers strategies to prevent and combat bullying.

The book will certainly be a helpful one – to educators as well as parents – but, in covering the extensive ground that it does, it inevitably does so superficially in places. The 12 chapters examine all the key themes in anti-bullying research and practice – from the nature of bullying and the role of bystanders through to what parents can do and what good schools can do, emphasising throughout the importance of a multi-faceted approach to bullying. The set of appendices at the end of the book also provides some valuable ideas on, for example, questionnaires to assess the extent of bullying and school anti-bullying policies.

Ken Rigby's lucid writing style makes it an easy book to read from cover to cover and its clear structure allows for readers to find, for themselves, the most pertinent sections.

The scope of the book is set out clearly in the opening chapter and each subsequent chapter, helpfully subtitled, is concisely summarised.

The author's laudable aim – to produce an academic book, research-based but accessible to a non-professional readership – is an aim that is manifestly achieved. *Children and Bullying* contains a refreshing balance of anecdote and information, research and strategy. The evidence base is number-referenced within the text – signposts to further reading collected at the end of the book – allowing those who wish only to search for practical strategies to do so. And there are plenty of practical strategies throughout the book – each of them examined for evidence of usefulness and brought together in the final 'Some Questions and Answers' chapter.

Children and Bullying is first and foremost an accessible book – an easy one to read. It covers all the ground that one would expect in a book on bullying and does so in a way that allows the reader to take what he or she wants from it and to know where to look for more. As a parent (though, now, of boys whose school days are well behind them!) it is, for me, reassuring and eminently practical. As a teacher (though, now, a teacher whose classroom days are well behind me!) it provides a clear sense of direction in terms of what has been successful in other schools in the UK and elsewhere. And as someone who now who works with both teachers and parents, it is a book I shall recommend to both without hesitation.

Michael Mills

Educational Psychologist