
Book Reviews

Disability and the Family: A Guide to Decisions for Adulthood. *H. Rutherford Turnbull, Ann P. Turnbull, G. J. Bronicki, Jean Ann Summers, and Constance Roeder-Gordon.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1989, vii + 417 pp., \$29.00 (paper).

The impact of the deinstitutionalization movement and the increasing awareness within society of the needs of older persons with disabilities have required a more systematic, holistic approach to future planning for these individuals than ever before. *Disability and the Family* by the Turnbulls and their colleagues at the University of Kansas is a timely and admirable attempt to organize and present a comprehensive guide to help families with the difficult decision-making process in all aspects of life. The book is based on the experiences of the authors, especially the Turnbulls, and many of the friends and families they have known in the field of developmental disabilities. As a result, there is an authenticity and urgency to their perspective that adds to the credibility of the material.

The book is organized around four major sections: decision making, financial planning and government benefits, planning for life in the community, and advocacy. There are also six appendices which include two scales to help with the decision-making process, an annotated bibliography of recommended supplementary readings, and a resource list of public, national, and professional agencies. An interesting feature is the interspersing of stories of seven families, described by the authors as a composite of many families they have known. Their personal stories help concretize the facts and complex issues raised in each section.

In the decision-making chapters, the authors detail what is involved in determining mental competence from a legal and practical standpoint, various types of consent, and guardianship. These are complex issues that the authors explain clearly and sensitively. They provide a framework, a six-step decision-making model, and a scale for helping to assess mental competence for different types of decision making. The second section on financial planning describes various government entitlement programs, wills and trusts, and methods of packaging these income sources. Families are appropriately cautioned about the necessity of getting professional advice, but this section

should serve as an excellent starting point and reference guide for financial planning.

The third section introduces the Preference Checklist, a comprehensive scale intended to solicit the disabled person's interests, needs, and desires in order to facilitate choices in vocational, recreational, and residential options. A wide range of models for living and work settings are described. Although it is clear that the authors' biases are toward maximizing independence and normalizing experiences, the discussion of the continuum of services is not strongly ideological and maintains a fairly balanced perspective. In contrast, in the section on advocacy, through the personal account of one of the families, the sheltered workshop program is portrayed in a very negative way and its administrators are characterized as unsympathetic and narrow-minded. Still, if the reader does not get caught up with the emotional side effects, the wealth of information given on residential, leisure, community, and vocational programs is very useful and provides a basis for optimism.

One concern in the discussion on residential alternatives, especially for families with autistic adults, is the impression given that there are many choices available and that, guided by the Preference Checklist, the disabled person can pick and choose with relatively few restrictions. This seems quite misleading in that most communities provide few options for the large number of individuals in need and most families take what is offered and are expected to be appreciative. The Preference Checklist is more realistically useful after a placement has been secured and may be adjusted or accommodated to the special interests of the resident. Perhaps the experiences of the authors led to a rosier picture of residential options, but for the moderately to severely handicapped autistic individual, group homes, supervised apartments, or other community-based arrangements are in short supply.

The final section is a primer on advocacy for parents and for the disabled person as a self-advocate. The chapter on self-advocacy is an interesting and inspiring description of how individuals, despite coping with disabilities, can effectively speak and act for themselves.

Unfortunately, the book has significant weaknesses that make it unlikely to be read by the group for whom it is primarily intended: families. Some of the material is excessively wordy and detailed, at times redundant. Its overall style can be burdensome to a reader who may not be as well versed as the authors in the various topics, nor as convinced of the necessity for careful assessment and planning. The case examples, while adding a helpful framework, tend to drift into clever pieces of fiction, which are contrived and artificial. The families do not really seem to represent the majority of families with a disabled member, but rather an idealized group. This type of guide and its target readership might have been better served with an instructional approach that was less technical and narrative in form, but briefer, with clear-

ly defined steps to follow and reference material for those inclined to do more in-depth study.

In spite of the shortcomings, *Disability and the Family* has a number of strengths that recommend it to families and professionals. The authors have an upbeat, forward-looking attitude about individuals with disabilities and their potential for a quality life. The book can serve as a source of motivation and practical help for families planning for the future. There are many useful suggestions, ideas, concepts, and strategies, including a number of creative approaches. It effectively addresses the difficult topic of estate planning, legal guardianship, and financial resources. The various appendices provide additional resource material. And some aspects of the case illustrations give a certain realism and add a dimension that enhances the meaningfulness of the book.

Overall, this is an important work and is highly recommended for professionals and parents who face the crucial task of helping the adult with disabilities achieve a complete and fulfilling life.

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Autism. *Laura Schreibman.* Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1988, 192 pp., \$19.95.

This volume is a brief treatment of a large topic, autism. As one might expect from its length, it will be more valuable for some audiences than others. A part of the series *Developmental Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry*, it will be very useful to clinicians. I would go even further than this: I think this book contains one of the best chapters on behavioral treatment for autism that exists, being especially strong on the details of this treatment. This is complemented by a second chapter on parent training and on classroom instruction. These two chapters should become basic reading for all therapists and classroom teachers working with autism as, together, they succeed in teaching a wealth of methods and principles of proven clinical value. At times there is a tinge of uncritical acceptance of behavioral treatment, but its limitations are also knowledgeed.

Although the volume is strong on facts, its use of psychological jargon renders it unsuitable for many readers who are parents of autistic children. Nor will it be of great value to research workers or students in the field as, despite being both carefully researched and concise, it is sadly not very up-to-

date in the work it cites. Many of its references are pre-1980, with the exception of relatively up-to-date reviews of the neurobiology and treatment of autism.

Developmental psychologists looking for any cognitive science in relation to autism will also be disappointed by this book. (Those interested in this could dip into Uta Frith's, 1989, new monograph.) The omission of cognitive science applications to autism is relatively unimportant to clinicians to whom I recommend Schreibman's book, since cognitive science has at present little to offer them.

Aside from the excellent clinical chapters in Schreibman's book, there are other soundly written chapters providing background information about autism (its history, behavioral characteristics, and diagnosis). For the clinician lacking in experience with autistic clients, the book serves admirably as a teaching manual both on autism and its treatment.

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REFERENCE

- Frith, U. (1989). *Autism: explaining the enigma*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.