



Introduction

If you are a teacher, chances are you will have some exposure to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The words *spectrum disorder* mean that every child's symptoms are different and that each child is affected to a varying degree. ASD affects how children (and adults) relate to the outside world—in other words, every aspect of daily life. Most children with ASD have auditory/verbal, visual/spatial, and motor processing difficulties that make everyday interactions challenging, even when they are communicating with very competent teachers (and often, parents).

This book is designed to help you understand and educate children with ASD. There is no magic formula for helping them learn to communicate or for moving beyond this into the curriculum. Most children with ASD can accomplish skills at their own pace and with different rates of success. Finding out what each child needs, using appropriate intervention strategies, and maintaining patience are the keys to reaching each of them. A child with ASD must rely on competent, caring teachers to establish a two-way relationship by following the child's lead; by supporting his spontaneity and internal motivation; by assisting the child to communicate; and, by helping him encounter and understand a range of feelings. All of these goals can be accomplished while he is interacting with peers and working on curriculum-based skills. An effective teacher becomes part of the child's world, understands his distinctiveness, and finds ways to comfort him.

