

# Resource file

Play ideas for children with autism, a useful reference for supporting children with epilepsy and a pocket-sized guide to anger and conflict management in schools are among the resources under review in this issue

## Playing, Laughing and Learning with Children on the Autism Spectrum 2nd Edition

Julia Moor



Details: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 116 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JB Tel: 020 7833 2307, [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) 2008, 304pp paperback, £13.99, ISBN 978 1 84310 608 1

This is a practical resource of play ideas for parents of children with an autistic spectrum disorder. The author, Julia Moor, recognised the value of such a book for parents having experienced first hand the need to build up a repertoire of play in order to interact with her own son, and having surveyed a hundred other parents in similar situations – therein lies the validity and breadth of this comprehensive book of play ideas.

The author's premise is that playing, laughing and learning will be achieved if the reader is able to find an 'emotional space' that both adult and child can occupy at the same time, for some part of any day, through 'a series of practical changes to the way we attempt to play and interact'.

Moor outlines why specific play activities are difficult for children with autism, and recommends general principles of using indirect non-confrontational play approaches alongside short bursts of structured, directed play as a means to access a child's attention and create opportunities for interaction and communication.

Due consideration is given to the practicalities of how to use and organise play equipment effectively. Through an exploration of specific areas of play – including physical activities, music, water play, art and craft, imaginative play, television and the computer – a series of practical ideas is presented on how to approach each area in order to maximise interaction opportunities and learning potential.

The range of ideas is underpinned by a healthy balance of research-based interventions and therapies, thus presenting an eclectic approach to play. As a consequence, both the relevance and effectiveness of these ideas are likely to stand the test of time.

The author uses case studies as a means of contextualising discussions around likely barriers and solutions related to specific play activities. Not only does this provide an effective model for readers to consider and

analyse issues from their own perspective, but it also avoids the presentation of prescriptive recommendations.

While the author advises readers from the outset that 'not all the play ideas will be appropriate for your child', it would be hard to imagine any reader failing to find some positive information among the plethora of ideas presented.

The organisation of content into play themes supports ease of access to relevant information. Similarly, the conversational style of writing, bullet-pointing of information and use of simple line drawings provide an extremely user-friendly format for the content of this book.

This second edition updates the original version to include ideas on how to use the computer, internet and digital camera to find and make resources and activities. Given the pace of change within the area of information technology, this section is most at risk of becoming outdated, particularly in respect of website information and adaptive hardware specifications. Nevertheless, there are some key pointers regarding use of the computer as a valuable resource.

While primarily directed at parents and carers, the book is relevant to a much broader readership; indeed, it would be a valuable addition to the bookshelf of any early years practitioner, playworker, teacher or teaching assistant within the primary phase of education.

Review by Christine Perkins,  
specialist teacher and parent

## Meeting the Needs of Students with Dyslexia

June Massey



**Details:** Continuum International Publishing, The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London SE1 7NX  
Tel: 020 7922 0880,  
[www.continuumbooks.com](http://www.continuumbooks.com)  
2008, 144pp paperback, £19.99,  
ISBN 978 1 85539 445 2

This eminently readable book guides the reader through a wealth of information about the management of dyslexia from early years through to the secondary phase and adulthood. Unlike many books about dyslexia, this one includes a substantial section on numeracy skills as well as demonstrating how the condition can affect information processing, verbal communication and organisation across all areas of the curriculum.

June Massey becomes a powerful advocate for the dyslexic learner amid a 'benchmark driven' education system. Clear insights are given into how this specific learning difficulty impacts on self-esteem and behaviours in the classroom and beyond. The inclusion of detailed case studies offers the reader first-hand experiences from dyslexic students, serving to illustrate a wealth of possible techniques, approaches and strategies that can be used to address particular learning needs. Timely and succinct references to research and useful websites are woven into the text at appropriate points in order to both inform and guide good practice.

The book is extremely well organised, enabling the reader quickly to locate information. There is a concise introduction, seven compact chapters and concluding sections covering contacts, suppliers, further reading and a comprehensive bibliography.

Topics covered include recognising signs of dyslexia, assessment, learning styles, impact on literacy skills and communication, strategies for reading and spelling, study skills, impact on maths and numeracy and, finally, the wider school community.

Good use is made of various graphic devices: differences in font size, style

and colour serve to draw the reader's attention. Information is visually chunked by being presented in short sharp bullet points as well as blocks of text. Separate text boxes highlight key information, and clear diagrams and tables complement the written material. Dotted throughout the text are references and links to other relevant sections of the book.

What I found especially powerful was the way in which the reader is clearly shown, and possibly made to feel, how dyslexia can so fundamentally affect functioning. Throughout, references to the detrimental impact on self-esteem ring out loud and clear. Expectations for students have to be realistic, as work may take at least twice as long for a dyslexic learner – either go for quality or quantity, but not both at the same time!

There is one particular snapshot from a dyslexic student describing his condition thus, 'like lottery balls. All of the words are in my head but I haven't got a clue in which order they will come out.'

The clarity and scope of the book make it highly suitable for both support staff and teachers alike.

**Review by Zena Paciente, LA learning support teacher and trainer**

## Meeting Special Needs: a practical guide to support children with Epilepsy

Rachel Baker



**Details:** Step Forward Publishing, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, London SE24 0PB  
Tel: 01202 724293,  
[www.practicalpreschoolbooks.com](http://www.practicalpreschoolbooks.com)  
2007, 20pp paperback, £11,  
ISBN: 978 1 90457 511 5

This practical guide has been written to provide useful information for supporting children with epilepsy. The author Rachel Baker is a freelance journalist, and mum to Sonny, who has epilepsy. When Sonny started nursery and developed epilepsy at the age of two, Rachel identified the need for more literature aimed specifically at childcare workers to aid a better understanding of the condition.

It is a practical, informative guide aimed at professionals working in childcare; however, it may also be of use to parents and anyone else wishing to know more about epilepsy and how to care for young children with epilepsy. There is a description of epilepsy, its causes and treatments and activities that may need to be avoided. There are also pages to copy and use, such as a

guide to seizures and a seizure chart. On the inside cover of the book there is a useful step-by-step quick reference sheet detailing basic first aid for epileptic seizures.

Included is an individual care plan ready to copy, and the contacts section provides a source to research epilepsy in more depth. There is a detailed explanation regarding medication and this also includes alternative therapies. The section on learning implications highlights psychological factors, seizures, and medication.

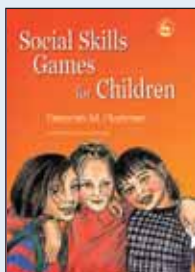
This quick guide is well set out and easy to read and makes a useful reference to have on the shelf of any childcare setting.

**Review by Jennie Cross, early years teacher**

## Reviews

### Social Skills Games for Children

Deborah M Plummer



**Details: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 116 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JB Tel: 020 7833 2307, [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) 2008, 176pp paperback, £15.99 ISBN 978 1 84310 617 3**

This book is written for any adults who wish to foster successful social strategies in children aged 5–12. It is in two parts – the first covers the theoretical background, and the second part contains the games themselves.

The games can be used in PSHE lessons and to help children reach specific targets, such as those in an individual education plan. They are complementary to the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme and can also be used in after-school clubs and play schemes.

The first part makes very good reading as it explains how social skills develop and why games are a good way to support social development. It suggests techniques to foster good social skills, such as descriptive praise and brief therapy techniques, and explains how to use imaging to help children express themselves.

There is a very useful index to the games to enable the reader to locate quickly a particular game. In addition, each game has a useful key which provides, at a glance, a guide to the youngest age for this game, how long it takes to play, the size of group it is most suited to, how much speaking is involved, and what foundation abilities or skills are developed (such as empathy, self-awareness, creative

thinking, concentration, turn-taking). In addition, the games are arranged in sections by core ability. Ideas for warm-up games and wind-down games enable the reader to plan a rounded session. There are good suggestions for ways to choose groups and group leaders.

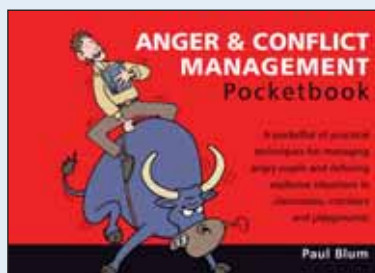
This is an excellent resource for primary schools, parents, carers and all those working with groups of children. As the author, a speech and language therapist, writes, 'By working our imagination like a muscle we learn to problem-solve, to tolerate frustration, to work through some of life's difficulties and so reach our own "child-level" of understanding of the complexities of the world – we make "child-sense" of our experiences in a simplified and safe way and thereby strengthen our emotional resilience.'

This book is a great resource to support that endeavour and I recommend it.

**Review by Mary Kelly, primary school SENCO**

### Anger & Conflict Management Pocketbook

Paul Blum



**Details: Teachers' Pocketbooks, Laurel House, Station Approach, Alresford, Hampshire SO24 9JH Tel: 01926 735573, [www.teacherspocketbooks.co.uk](http://www.teacherspocketbooks.co.uk) 2009, 128pp A6 paperback, £7.99, ISBN 978 1 903776 95 7**

This is a great pocket-size reference guide to anger and conflict management in schools. It provides an easy framework to deconstruct the emotive episodes familiar to all adults working in schools. More than that, it provides a framework for further reading and thinking as well as practical suggestions.

The first indication that this is going to be a really useful resource is the contents page: clear and inviting. I didn't want to put it down. Paul Blum's foreword lets us know that he's writing from experience, and his experiences echo mine. Any teacher struggling to work with consequence and reward systems will enjoy reflecting on their own practice using this guide. It will certainly resonate with teachers in large comprehensive schools such as my own.

I particularly liked the bullet-pointed page layout, the footers denoting the chapter and the limited but judicious use of diagrams and cartoons. It's really easy to dip into this book and to refer back to specific sections. The pocket-size layout adds to the synthesis of information, and the 128 pages cover a huge topic.

The case studies lend themselves to easy discussion. As I read through I could see different audiences for different chapters: NQTs, assistants, middle managers and leadership teams. Everyone will take what they need from this book and revisit it for reassurance and to consolidate good practice. I really appreciated the chapter on conflict beyond the classroom but each chapter prompted recognition and an 'I've been there' feeling.

In short, there was nothing I didn't like about the book or the approaches recommended to help children manage anger. I'll certainly be using it for CPD (continuing professional development) in school, ordering further copies and visiting the other titles in this series. If you're looking for an easy-to-use and comprehensive resource which doesn't wear you out after a day at work but has clarity and balance at its heart, I would recommend you try this book.

**Review by Angela Carey, secondary school learning support co-ordinator**