

HIGH-FUNCTIONING INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM

CURRENT ISSUES IN AUTISM

Series Editors: Eric Schopler and Gary B. Mesibov

*University of North Carolina School of Medicine
Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

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To the families seeking
more information on high-functioning autism,
with the hope that this volume
will be a valuable source of information and support

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Preface

Division TEACCH, located in the School of Medicine at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was one of the first—and remains one of the most comprehensive—programs in the world assisting people with autism and their families. As a comprehensive, lifelong diagnostic and treatment program, Division TEACCH treats a wide variety of clients of all ages. Those in TEACCH, therefore, are acutely aware of the similarities among clients who are described as having autism and equally aware of the differences within this group.

Of our over 2,000 clients with autism in North Carolina, approximately 30% would be classified as high functioning. Although those in this group evidence many of the difficulties typical of people with autism, their superior language skills and greater ability to conceptualize add unique challenges. It is important for parents and professionals working with high-functioning people with autism to recognize and respond to these. This book is designed to facilitate that process.

As were the preceding books in our series, *Current Issues in Autism*, this volume is based on one of the TEACCH conferences held in Chapel Hill each May. The books are not simply published proceedings of the conference papers. Instead, conference participants are asked to develop full chapters around their presentations. Other international experts whose work is beyond the scope of each conference but related to the major themes are asked to contribute chapters as well. These volumes provide the most up-to-date information on research and professional practice available on the most important issues in autism.

This volume is designed to advance our understanding of high-functioning people with autism. Current diagnostic and treatment approaches are presented, along with cogent analyses of the current conceptions about the neurological processes involved. Personal perspectives from parents and high-functioning clients add depth and a perspective not often found in professional books. These are included for those readers who have not yet had firsthand experience with the challenges and issues particular to high-level autism. They are included also because we found them to be both inspirational and a joy to read. We expect this volume to be of interest to students, professionals, and parents concerned with understanding and assisting individuals with autism.

ERIC SCHOPLER
GARY B. MESIBOV

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We also want to thank our many TEACCH colleagues, who are too numerous to name, for their ongoing help, assistance, and cooperation. Their insights and understanding of people with autism are a continuing source of information and inspiration to us. As with all of our efforts in the TEACCH program, this book would not have been possible without the assistance of the families of people with autism in North Carolina. We owe a special debt for this volume to those high-functioning individuals and their families whose cooperation and participation in our program have taught us what we know about this important topic. Finally, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine and the North Carolina State Legislature make all our work possible through their continued support.

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