
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Taffel, R. (2001). *Getting through to difficult kids and parents; Uncommon sense for child professionals*. Guilford Press; New York.

Reviewed by: Mirjana Adzija

This is a pragmatic book that offers concrete techniques and suggestions for working with families to increase communication and connectedness. The book's author, Ron Taffel, is founder of Family and Couples Treatment Services at the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy in New York and has been working with families and children for 25 years. In this book, he integrates his experiences as clinician, public speaker, parent, and author into an accessible resource for professionals and parents.

Each chapter functions as a self-contained unit with easy-to-follow techniques and abundant examples. Though short on theory, the book is written in a rudimentary fashion that makes for a quick read that is accessible to all child professionals. Taffel begins with a brief overview on how to gather information efficiently and accurately and how to give balanced feedback that will help initiate change in families. Next, the author focuses on spotting developmental and psychiatric problems. Chapter three discusses children labeled difficult due to temperamental characteristics. Six major temperaments are outlined with descriptions and recommendations for each temperament.

The next two chapters focus on the professional and his/her connection with parents. First, the importance of accurately empathizing with parents is emphasized. Taffel depicts some problems facing parents, and suggests how to create a readiness for change and a cooperative atmosphere. Second, professional self-awareness is emphasized. Taffel discusses using countertransference and here-and-now moments as a tool for insight into families and one's experiences with families.

The latter part of the book deals with key issues facing families. In chapter six the subject is discipline and creating effective and appropriate consequences. Chapter seven is dedicated to teens—the pressures facing today's teens and reconnecting parents with their teenaged children. Chapter eight highlights the issue of self-esteem in children and offers suggestions on building and nurturing self-esteem. Helping parents create a united front and the implicit gender arrangements that often create friction in families is the next subject, followed by a chapter on creating the time, space, and openness necessary to encourage communication in families. The last chapter discusses the increased violence and pressures facing today's families and the need for children to feel personally known. Taffel finishes by listing core attributes necessary for healthy children.

This is not a book to read cover to cover. Rather, its strength is in its use as a reference. Professionals can employ the book as a resource for specific ideas and strategies to use with families to increase communication and connectedness. Also, this is a great book to recommend to parents.