

## Mitchell Taubman, Ron Leaf, and John McEachin: *Crafting Connections: Contemporary Applied Behavior Analysis for Enriching the Social Lives of Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder*

DRL Books, New York, NY, 2011, 242 pp (Paperback)

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Published online: 29 October 2011  
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Taubman, Leaf, and McEachin (2011) have written a practical guide to teaching social skills to individuals on the autism spectrum. Unlike many other books on the topic, *Crafting Connections*, is empirically based, i.e., based upon research rather than practice wisdom. Also, unlike many books that attempt to teach social skills to individuals on the autism spectrum, the techniques and topics contained in *Crafting Connections*, are not geared solely toward children on the autism spectrum. The techniques can be used with teens and young adults with ASDs as well.

The book is organized into two major sections. The first section contains eight chapters describing the basic principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and how these apply to the teaching of social skills to individuals with ASDs. Topics in this section include: (1) Teaching Interactions; (2) True Friendships; (3) Assessment of Social Skills in ASD; and (4) Creating Curricula: Task and Strategic Analysis. The second section of the book is devoted to a social skills curriculum for individuals with ASDs. Here the reader learns how to apply the concepts developed in the first section of the book to broad social concepts such as social awareness, social communication, social interaction, social learning, and social relatedness and within each of these broad areas to very specific and concrete skills. For example, the part of the curriculum that deals with social awareness covers topics including “How Do I Act in this place?” “People Don’t Always Mean What They Say” and Perspective Taking. These situations or skills are broken

down into step by step instructions that are discrete and manageable. The social skills also cover areas of difficulty that individuals on the spectrum frequently face like giving compliments, “letting go,” interrupting others, responding to teasing and bullying, and tolerating the presence and proximity of peers.

This book is ideal for educators, social workers, and psychologists who are responsible for teaching social skills to individuals on the autism spectrum. Even novice professionals can feel confident using the curriculum because it is clearly laid out with step by step instructions. Each skill set section has objectives, the necessary prerequisite skills the individuals should possess, the procedure to be followed as well as different phases of acquisition of the complex skill. Although the book provides step by step instructions, it is simultaneously flexible enough to respond to the unique learning needs of an individual on the spectrum. The final phase for all of these skills involves generalizing the skill across different environments. Parents may want to consider purchasing the book as a way of supporting their child’s social skill development by using the ABA based techniques in this book.

*Crafting Connections* is a welcomed addition to many professionals’ libraries. It provides empirically based techniques for teaching social skills to a wide age range of individuals on the autism spectrum. *Crafting Connections* directly deals with many of the social pitfalls individuals with ASDs face on a daily basis.

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