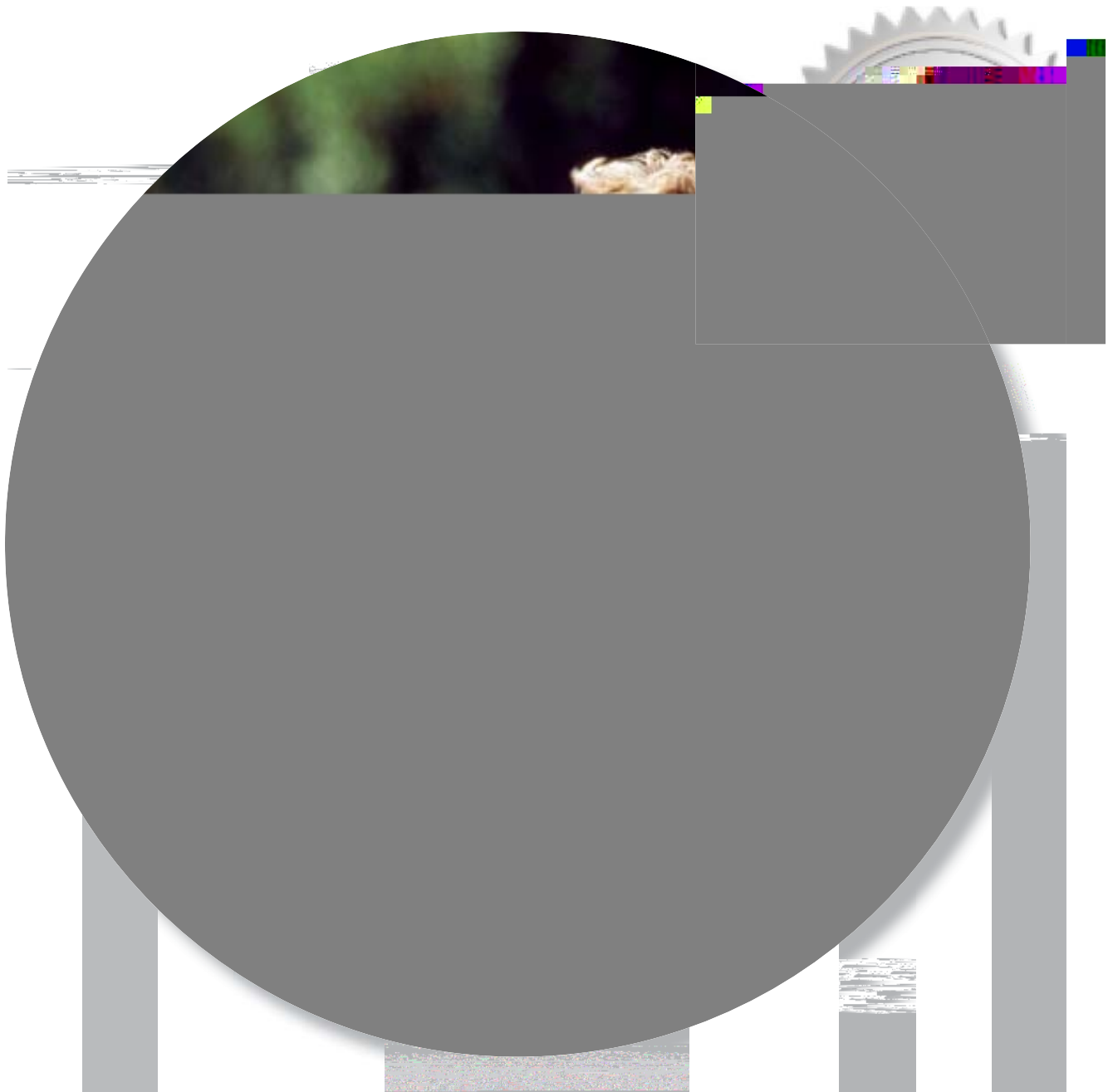


Understanding AD/HD: Symptoms, Diagnosis, Management, & Myths

by Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.



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What Is the Relationship Between AD/HD & Self-Control?

As scientific research emerges, defining problems with the development of self-control as the core deficit in children with AD/HD, a better understanding of treatment is also developing. Medications used to treat AD/HD do not necessarily improve attention. They increase self-control leading to sustained effort, focus, attention, impulse control, and enhanced capacity to manage physical activity. Stimulants, in fact, do not reduce hyperactivity but stimulate a center in the brain that human beings use to govern and regulate themselves. It is for this reason that stimulants, such as caffeine, are popular in our culture because even unaffected individuals may derive some small benefits in regards to enhanced self-control.

We now recognize, however, that **while stimulant medication may reduce immediate symptoms of AD/HD, the medication alone does not appear to contribute to positive, long-term, adult outcomes for these children.** Programs are being developed to help kids during their formative years experience increased opportunities to learn and develop the self-control so essential and necessary to become a productive member of society. Presently, the programs I like best have been developed by Dr. Myrna Shure. They're referenced in the Resources section of this guide.

AD/HD by Other Names and Acronyms

While Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is the official term and acronym used by today's mental health care professionals, it is sometimes referred to by other names and abbreviations. For example, it is sometimes called:

ADHD (without the "slash" in the middle)

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

Attention Disorder

Timesaving questionnaires and brief histories provide a very efficient means of identifying the 20%

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What Can Lead a Child with AD/HD to a Positive Future?

better life outcome, treatment alone doesn't predict outcome. From a common sense perspective, if every day of a child's life is better, certainly the sum total of his life should be better. Yet, we have had difficulty demonstrating this fact. What we have demonstrated, however, **is the factors that contribute to good life outcome for all kids are particularly important for children with disabling conditions, such as AD/HD.**

Resilient Mindset a Crucial Factor

Current treatment for AD/HD is now dual focused. First, we focus on research proven interventions involving medication, education, parent training, and classroom intervention to reduce the symptoms of and impairment caused by AD/HD. We have discovered that by making tasks interesting and payoffs valuable, children with AD/HD function dramatically better.

Our treatment for AD/HD, however, has now taken on a second, equally important component, providing children with AD/HD opportunities to develop a resilient mindset. Kids with such a mindset are empathic. They communicate effectively. They learn to problem solve, develop a social conscience, and, most importantly, are self-disciplined.

Parents engaged in the process of raising resilient youngsters possess an understanding that is sometimes explicit, at other times implicit or intuitive, of what they can do to nurture this mindset in their children. To do this requires parents to appreciate the components of resilience so that their interactions with their children are guided by an important set of principles, ideas, and actions. Although each child's road to adulthood is shaped by a variety of factors, these principles are applicable for all roads and can direct all parents in raising resilient children.

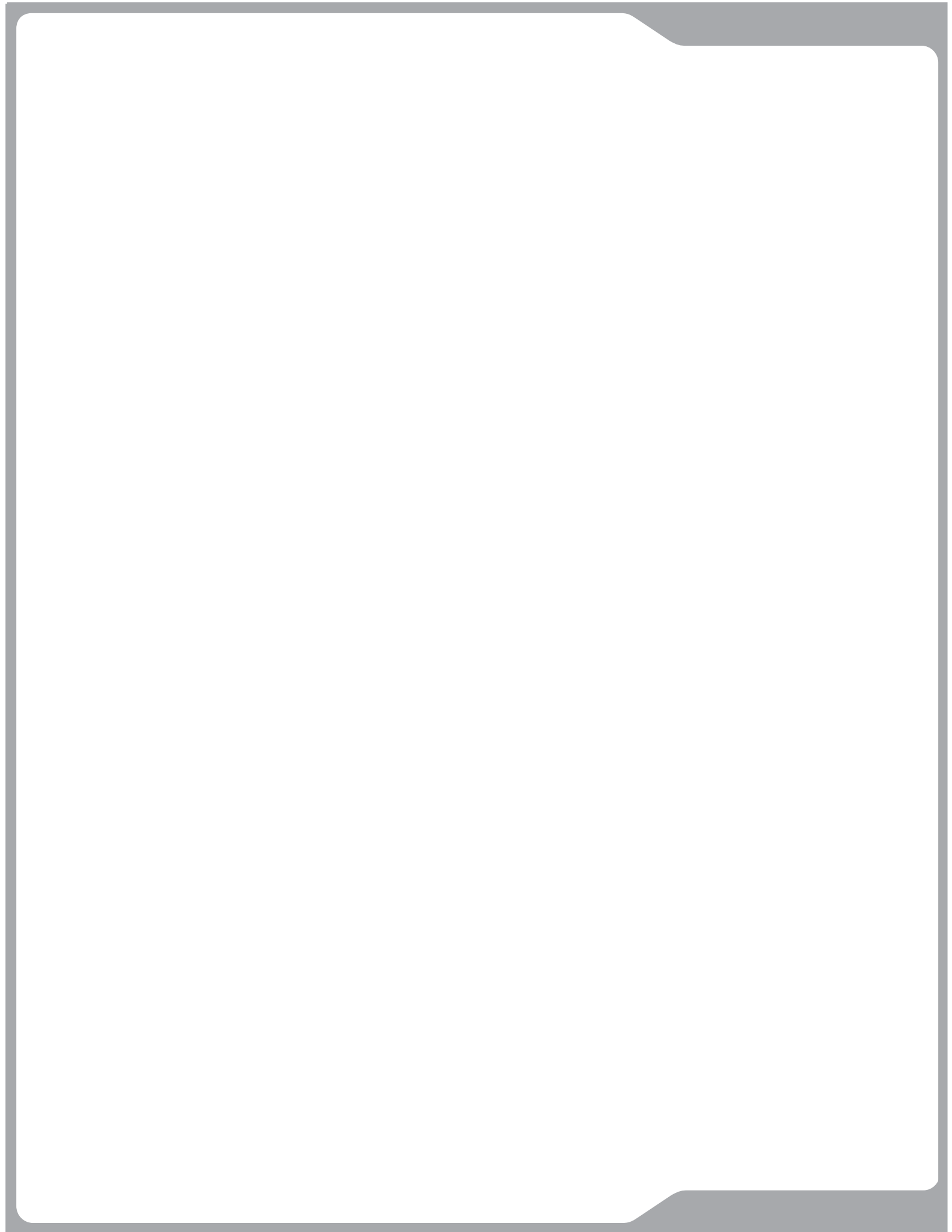
Just as some kids require more support, effort, and instruction to learn to ride a bicycle or swim, similarly it is critical for us to provide support for children with AD/HD to assist them in developing self-control. Day in and day out modeling of the behaviors necessary to become self-disciplined can assist kids with AD/HD to develop the internal skills necessary to function more effectively in future life.

who's in the midst of cleaning her room and refuses to stop when parents say it's time to leave for the amusement park.

Finally, consider that if learning to read, write, spell, or complete mathematics is harder to accomplish for a particular child, that child is likely to become frustrated. If, in fact, your self-control is limited, you will frustrate even quicker. Thus, if you struggle with delayed development of self-control and also struggle to develop phonemic awareness, the activities required to master reading — more time on task and more repetitions of reading activities — are exactly the activities you're least likely to choose to engage in.

Thus, it's not surprising that, among a group of kids with AD/HD, the rate of learning disability is 20 to 30 percent, with as high as 80 percent falling behind by high school. **The rate of kids with anxiety may be 20 to 30 percent; depression, as high as 25 percent; and oppositional behavior, 50 to 70 percent.**

The second part of this question addressed whether treatment of AD/HD can reduce the occurrence of these problems. Given the view that AD/HD is a catalyst, the absence of the catalyst decreases the chances of a reaction. Thus, although there are no guarantees a child at risk to develop depression, anxiety, learning disability, or at risk



What Are Some Myths about People with AD/HD?

In the nearly 4,000 peer reviewed, scientific studies dealing with AD/HD over the past thirty years, there hasn't been a single study in which the group with AD/HD performed better on a valuable trait, asset, or behavior than those without AD/HD. This is not to demoralize, demonize, nor pathologize children with AD/HD. It is to suggest that being delayed in the development of self-control in our complex society is no picnic. It is no blessing for the kids who struggle with this problem nor for their dedicated teachers or parents who live with and love them.

Although it has been suggested that some individuals historically and currently who have achieved success have done so because they are inattentive or novelty seeking, it is yet to be scientifically demonstrated that the symptom qualities of AD/HD by themselves lead to positive life outcome.

It is my belief that if, in fact, many great men and women struggled with AD/HD, their greatness was obtained because they possessed other skills and abilities and were afforded opportunities to overcome this condition.

Fortunately, the symptoms of AD/HD can be treated and managed effectively leading to more successful and happier lives for those who may struggle against its diminished capacity for self-control. We must turn our attention to the multiple forces and critical problems that appear to be increasingly creating a vulnerable youth as we enter this new millennium. I do not believe we need to create myths or "Just So Stories" to help kids with AD/HD and their families feel better about this impairing condition. Rather, I believe it is time that we begin focusing on the strengths and assets of all children while managing those liabilities that impair their ability to meet the world we have created for them.

Expert Answers



Understanding AD/HD: Symptoms, Diagnosis, Management, & Myths

Resources

AD/HD & Self-Control

Books

Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete Authoritative Guide for Parents

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1572305606/>

by Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D.

From Chaos to Calm: Effective Parenting of Challenging Children with ADHD and Other Behavioral Problems

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0399526617/>

by Janet E. Heining Ph.D., et al

Raising a Thinking Pre-Teen

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/080506642X/>

by Myrna B. Shure, Ph.D., et al

I Can Problem Solve

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0878224718/>

by Myrna B. Shure, Ph.D.

Raising a Thinking Child

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0671534637/>

by Myrna B. Shure, Ph.D., et al

Getting Through to Difficult Kids and Parents: Uncommon Sense for Child Professionals

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1572304758/>

by Ron Taffel

Daredevils and Daydreamers: New Perspectives on Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0385487576/>

by Barbara D. Ingersoll, Ph.D.

Diagnosing AD/HD

Books

Attention Deficit Disorder and Learning Disabilities: Realities, Myths, and Controversial Treatments

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0385469314/>

by Barbara D. Ingersoll, Ph.D. and Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.

Hyperactivity: Why Won't My Child Pay Attention

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0471533076/>

by Sam Goldstein, Ph.D. and Michael Goldstein M.D.

Resources

Diagnosing AD/HD (*continued*)

Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors: A Guide to Intervention and Classroom Management

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1557665001/>

by Nancy Mather, Ph.D. & Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.

Overcoming Underachieving: An Action Guide to Helping Your Child Succeed in School

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0471170321/>

by Sam Goldstein, Ph.D. and Nancy Mather, Ph.D.

Teenagers with ADHD: A Parent's Guide

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0933149697/>

by Chris A. Zeigler Dendy, M.S.

When You Worry About the Child You Love: Emotional and Learning Problems in Children

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0684832682/>

by Edward Hallowell, M.D.

AD/HD & Future Outcomes

Books

Raising Resilient Children

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0809297647/>

by Robert Brooks, Ph.D. & Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.

Nurturing Resilience in Our Children

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0658021109/>

by Sam Goldstein, Ph.D. and Robert Brooks, Ph.D.

The Self-Esteem Teacher

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0886714184/>

by Robert Brooks, Ph.D.

Touch Points: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/020162690X/>

by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

Building Healthy Minds: The Six Experiences that Create Intelligence and Emotional Growth in Babies and Young Children

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0738203564/>

by Nancy Breslau Lewis & Stanley Greenspan, M.D.

On the Web

Raising Resilient Children Foundation

<http://raisingresilientkids.com/>

