BOOK REVIEWS

Integrative Group Therapy: The Structured Five-Stage Approach (2nd ed.)
Mildred Ross, MS, OTR (1991). Slack, Inc. 6900 Grove Road, Thorofare, NJ 08086-9447
172 pp., $25

Ross has once again written a highly readable as well as practical book on integrative group therapy. This book targets professionals working with special populations. The book details the five-stage approach as “a comprehensive approach for presenting selected sensory stimuli in an organized, systematic manner. It produces a structure for the most effective and consistent results with populations where making contact is difficult and the usual group approach does not work” (p. viii). The author believes that “it is the sequential way in which selected activities are introduced in a group format and how they are presented that can help prepare the central nervous system to integrate the sensory information for an adaptive response” (p. viii).

The activities described in this manual are based on what is understood from neurophysiological principles in relation to sensory integration, neurodevelopmental theory, and other approaches in motor rehabilitation. The overview of the theories assists the reader in understanding the physiological response to movement and to all group events, thus providing the means for improving treatment. The book does not explain theory in a comprehensive manner; instead, it shows the application of theory to practice.

The reader will find ample activity suggestions for those clients who require unusual amounts of cues, environmental adaptations, and assistance to perform adaptively. Each of the five stages is described in detail. Emphasis is on the presentation of movement, categorized as a perceptual task, and helps the reader discern when activity is appropriate. Additionally, the reader is given identified outcomes in motor, cognitive, and emotional responses.

It is evident that the author is aware of the intricacies and problems faced by practitioners, because the contents of the book are applied to varied settings. An illustrated analysis of the five-stage group is presented in chapter 11.

The original assessment tool devised in the first edition has been revised. The author indicates that “clinical experience using the assessment suggests that the test items relate to the foundation skills demanded in daily performance. As the level of ability to participate in daily living tasks diminishes, the ability to perform the test item also diminishes” (p. 107). Reliability and validity studies are being planned.

The resource section is especially helpful. Developmental tools are listed by stage. An extensive bibliography lists several excellent references for supplementary reading; also included is Allen’s Lower Cognitive Level Test. This book can be of assistance to all health professionals who are frequently frustrated with group situations involving special populations. Readers will find this edition markedly different than the first edition.

Tricia Beha, OTR

Sensory Integration: Theory and Practice

As the title suggests, the authors of this book present discussions of the theory of sensory integration as developed by A. Jean Ayres and explain how the theory is used as a basis for evaluating persons suspected of having a sensory integrative disorder and in treating those persons identified as having such a disorder. Composed of four parts—Theoretical Concepts, Domains of Function, Evaluation and Treatment, and Research—and written by 12 contributors, this book can be useful to persons in a variety of professions and capacities who want to or need to know more about sensory integration evaluation and treatment techniques, which are practiced primarily by occupational therapists. The ideas presented are not new, and the authors in no way imply that they are. For example, most of the information on the sensory system in Part 2, Domains of Function, is available elsewhere, especially in neuroscience literature, and much of the other information is known by occupational therapists who have been well trained in sensory integration. The authors’ major contribution is the presentation of theoretical and practical evaluation and treatment concepts that were previously private knowledge; one could only obtain such knowledge by being trained by Ayres herself or by one or more of those persons trained by Ayres. By placing this information in the public domain, the authors reduce much of the unnecessary mystery that has often surrounded the use of sensory integration theory, evaluation, and treatment techniques and more likely guarantees both the continuity of its clinical use and its expansion through practice and further research. This is no minor contribution; the text provides a more accurate, more comprehensible, and more comprehensive public discussion of Ayres’ theory and treatment than has any other published work, including the original works of Ayres herself.

Highlights of the book are explanations of the relation between theory and clinical practice, discussions of the boundaries of sensory integration theory and treatment, a summary of the Sensory Integration and Praxis Tests (Ayres, 1989), descriptions of the process of planning and providing sensory integration treatment, and explanations of the relation of play to sensory integration treatment.

The book is sufficiently clear, straightforward, and detailed to permit its use as a textbook in an occupational therapy course on theory or pediatrics. Yet sections of the book deal with complex and challenging concepts in such a way as to permit therapists already steeped in sensory integration either to gain greater insight themselves or to help others understand the theory and its clinical applications. Additionally, it is exciting for therapists well-trained in sensory integration evaluation and treatment techniques to have familiar concepts articulated in a public, rather than a private, format, which affords them an opportunity to reflect on and assess their own evaluation and treatment sessions. The book can be useful not only
to occupational therapists but also to other professionals, including physicians, special educators, teachers, and other allied health professionals, who may need or want to develop a greater understanding of sensory integration for a variety of reasons other than to provide treatment. Sections of this book may even help some parents to better understand the nature of their child's disorder. Generally, this text, more than any other available work, allows the reader to better understand what occupational therapists do. Rarely is a book written that can meet the needs of such diverse groups. A number of questions about sensory integration theory, evaluation, and treatment that have been raised both by occupational therapists and non-occupational therapists are posed, addressed, and clarified.

The book is not without its shortcomings and could be strengthened in several areas. The chapters are not evenly written. The style varies from chapter to chapter, and whereas some chapters are lively, concise, and easy to read, others are not. A sense of unity and overall integration of content is obtained through an artificial means—use of the royal we rather than from a more natural unity of style. In addition, more consistent editing might have reduced some repetition, wordiness, and minor grammatical errors, resulting in greater precision and conciseness. Several times the authors engage in semantic dancing to suggest new meanings and interpretations. Some of the references in the text could be more extensive and direct. For example, the authors sometimes fail to provide references to scientists who are the neuroscience experts in the topic under discussion, referring instead to secondary and tertiary sources. The index might also be more comprehensive. The appendices could be better integrated within the framework of the text; for example, Appendix 6-A appears to be of enough importance either to be presented in a later chapter or to be developed into a separate chapter, and Appendix 5-A is unnecessary because it is published elsewhere. The four parts of the book are unevenly developed. Unfortunately, Part 4, Research, appears abortive and not an integral part of the text, perhaps because it contains only one chapter. Other relevant discussions of research in this section would strengthen the book.

Considering the complex nature of the topic that the authors have undertaken to discuss as well as what the book accomplishes, the limitations are somewhat minor and forgivable. Occupational therapists, regardless of their area of practice, will benefit from reading this book, especially Parts 1 and 3. Without undergoing the usual length of time required for a book to become a classic in a field, Sensory Integration: Theory and Practice is destined to become a classic, perhaps not only in the field of occupational therapy but also in other fields whose practitioners require an understanding of the relation between theory and clinical practice.

O. Jayne Bowman, MA, MS, OTR

Reference

Briefly Noted
Caring for People With Multiple Disabilities: An Interdisciplinary Guide for Caregivers

Written by three consulting therapists, this well-organized book offers general information about occupational therapy, speech pathology, and physical therapy relative to patients with multiple handicaps aged 5 years through adulthood. Using excellent, clear line drawings, the authors define conditions, techniques, and equipment in basic terms. Especially noteworthy are the drawings of upper and lower extremity range of motion movements, abnormal tone, and primitive reflexes.

Other areas of exploration include positioning; transfers; activities of daily living; and oral motor, gross motor, fine motor, play, and communication skills. These instructional pages prove to be an invaluable resource for family members, allied health professionals and paraprofessionals, teachers, students, new therapists, and consultants.

This interdisciplinary book is an outstanding resource for all therapists working with children and adults with developmental disabilities for use in service preparation, in the education of other professionals, and in the simplification of home care for family members or other caregivers.

Toni Thompson-Rangel, MA, OTR

Life Management Skills II: Reproducible Activity Handouts Created for Facilitators

Life Management Skills II answers a practical need for therapists working in mental health facilities as well as those in community-based wellness and prevention programs. The authors have provided 50 activities that cover such areas as activities of daily living, anger management, communication skills, self-esteem, and stress management. Each activity page consists of a reproducible handout on one side and a facilitator's guide on the other. The handout is used to facilitate participation, organize the activity, provide a visual cue, and provide immediate feedback as to the purpose of the activity. The guide provides a short protocol for the activity and suggests alternative methods for presenting the activity.

This book, printed on heavy paper stock and spiral-bound, is designed for easy reproduction of the handouts. The graphics and format of the activities are excellent and encourage participation. Each facilitator's guide provides structure for the activity, which would be especially helpful to the new therapist and student as well as the experienced therapist who is using the activity for the first time.

The book does not state the functional level necessary for participation in an activity. A participant would need to have the intellectual capacity or educational level to read and understand each activity. The activities would be appropriate for higher levels of functioning where there is some ability for abstract thinking.

Life Management Skills II does an excellent job of fulfilling the stated purpose of providing activities for facilitators. Additionally, it is an excellent book for use with occupational therapy students in group process and psychosocial course work.

Becki A. Trickey, MHS, OTR/L