SOFTWARE & TECHNOLOGY REVIEWS

The Winning Combination


The Winning Combination is a four-program series on motivation, goal setting, assertiveness, and negotiation. Although each program can be used independently, the program developers suggest they be used sequentially.

The series, which requires the user to have at least a fifth-grade reading level, is appropriate for adolescents and young adults. An instruction guide for each of the four programs contains a program description; specific goals and objectives; program content; prerequisite skills, concepts, and vocabulary; teaching strategies and options; hardware use; and references.

The first program, Be A Winner: Be Motivated, determines the user’s perceptions, attitudes, and values as they relate to his or her style of academic or job motivation. These factors are categorized as intrinsic, extrinsic, or mixed motivations. If appropriate, the program suggests more positive perceptions and attitudes. This program contains a bookmark system, which allows the user to save his or her responses for later use. The program also provides a printout of the user’s motivational style. This program consists of five segments that must be run sequentially.

The second program, Be A Winner: Set Your Goals, also consists of five segments: goals, values, aptitudes, abilities, and opportunity costs. When the user completes these segments, his or her responses are printed out. The printout provides a personalized outline of the user’s future plans. This particular program’s strengths are that it defines terms clearly and stresses to the user that goals need to be specific.

The third program, Be A Winner: Be Assertive, consists of eight segments, which cover assertiveness with friends, family, and boyfriends or girlfriends as well as assertiveness in work, school, and commercial or consumer situations. This program also includes a self-assessment and an assertiveness test. In addition to assertiveness, aggressiveness, and nonassertiveness, passive aggressiveness is discussed.

The fourth and final program, Be A Winner: Negotiate, consists of six segments: attitude assessment, needs, communication, time, information, and power. Throughout the program, negotiation is presented as a way to meet needs and resolve conflicts.

Although a monochrome monitor is adequate for running these programs, I strongly recommend the use of a color monitor because the program’s color graphics are very good.

The disadvantages of this series are that sufficient room is not always available for the user’s responses to questions and that the programs do not always provide appropriate feedback to incorrect answers.

I do not recommend that these programs be used to replace life skills groups. Patient–therapist interaction on the issues covered is essential. I do believe, however, that The Winning Combination offers a useful adjunct to treatment. I use these programs with adolescents and young adults on an acute inpatient psychiatric unit.

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Unicorn Expanded Keyboard II


Occupational therapists seeking ways for adult and pediatric clients to efficiently and effectively access a computer or communication device will find the Unicorn Expanded Keyboard II an exceptionally versatile alternative keyboard. The Unicorn Expanded Keyboard II is a 23¾ in. x 14¾ in. flat piece of blue-opaque plastic, ¼ in. thick. It is covered with 128 flat, pressure-sensitive squares (membrane switches) and is similar to a microwave touch panel. The touch-sensitive areas are arranged in a matrix of 8 rows and 16 columns. An overlay can be inserted between the touch-sensitive squares and a liftable transparent plastic sheet. The overlay visually designates what key or keyboard function each touch-sensitive square represents, just as the markings do on a standard keyboard.

A ribbon cable, which attaches to an interface device, is attached at the keyboard’s right upper corner. The Unicorn Expanded Keyboard II requires an interface device for operation. The interface instructs the computer to act as if its regular keyboard keys were being depressed when, actually, the Unicorn’s touch-sensitive keys are being used. The two most widely used interfaces for the Unicorn Expanded Keyboard II are the Adaptive Firmware Card for Apple and the PC Serial A.I.D. (alternative input device) for IBM and IBM-compatibles. Both of these interfaces are available from authorized Unicorn dealers.

The Unicorn Expanded Keyboard II includes a well-written owner’s manual (revised March 1987) that details basic use and setup. Unfortunately, many therapists are unaware of the Unicorn’s speech output capabilities (and therefore have not purchased a speech synthesizer) because they have not read to the last page of the manual to explore this function. In addition, the instruction manual pages for the Talking Unicorn are contained on the disk itself and must be printed out. Many novice users are confused by this setup and therefore miss valuable information.

The value of this alternative keyboard for occupational therapists is its easy customizing features, which require no programming experience. The keyboard is adaptable for both children and adults who cannot use a standard keyboard efficiently because