

Autism Spectrum

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Review

The Miller Method®: Developing the Capacities of Children on the Autism Spectrum

By Arnold Miller with Kristina Chrétien (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

Liane Holliday Willey, Ed.D.

COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGIST ARNOLD MILLER, and his late wife, speech-language pathologist Eileen Eller-Miller, began working together in the 1960s. This book, *The Miller Method: Developing the Capacities of Children on the Autism Spectrum* is, as Dr. Miller himself indicates, a continuation of their work. I found it comforting that the principles that Dr. Miller and his collaborating author, Kristina Chrétien, discuss are tried and true. In fact, I believe that the Miller Method®, which is built around cognitive-developmental systems theory, is a very cohesive and sound system through which counselors, parents, and teachers can help children on the autism spectrum to develop cognitive, linguistic, and social awareness. While there are plenty of new terms to learn, take heart, because they are clearly defined and understandable.

Miller's and Chrétien's text is extremely user-friendly, though it does remind me of a textbook designed to teach methodology. Don't take that to imply that this is a boring book that you have to force yourself to "down" along with a few jolts of caffeine and a bunch of highlighters. Clearly, it is not (although, I admit that I did curl up with this book—highlighters in hand—simply because I was intrigued enough to want to read this book to the end, taking notes the whole time to make sure I didn't miss even one tiny bit!). Simply stated, this is a very good book—the kind of book that will make you feel more knowledgeable about autistic behaviors, and most importantly, better prepared to help children with autism. In addition to the richly elaborated and informative text, case studies, photos of key aspects of the program in action and other illustrations, enable the reader to develop a thorough understanding of program components. In addition, a super set of appendices and an extensive resource list complement the text exceptionally well.

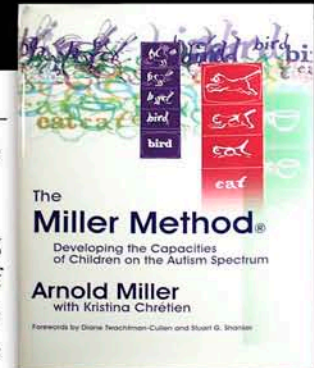
One of the things I like best about Dr. Miller's approach is his belief that people who care for those with autism need to be honest with themselves when assessing the children in their care. I agree with Dr. Miller, because without a realistic view of where the child is, we will either write

goals that are too shallow or too far-fetched. Neither extreme does anyone any good.

Dr. Miller's theories and accompanying program are designed around the belief that people with autism are not puppets whose strings we can pull, and whose compliance we can compel according to some pre-determined design. Instead, Dr. Miller believes that people with autism, when guided to reach inside and find their mettle will rise to their potential—whatever that potential might be. In a nutshell (a thin nutshell, since you'll really need to read the book to get at the nut itself), the Miller Method® places children with autism in situations that challenge their bodies and minds while all the while enticing them to work through their comfort zone to challenging and potentially uneasy zones until functional behaviors emerge. This holistic approach makes sense and it has been shown to be effective!

If I were Dorothy, I'd say Dr. Miller is like the symbolic Wizard of Oz—the person to whom those of us with autism go to find our hearts, our brains, and our courage to find our way back "home" to a better life experience. Thanks to Dr. Miller, his late wife, Eileen Eller-Miller, and his very able co-collaborator, Kristina Chrétien, for bringing this program and book to our community. 🍷

Liane Holliday Willey, Ed.D is the author of *Asperger Syndrome in the Family: Redefining Normal and Pretending to be Normal: Living with Asperger's Syndrome*. She is also the editor of *Asperger Syndrome in Adolescence: Living with the Ups, the Downs and Things in Between*. All of Liane's works have been published by Jessica Kingsley Publisher, London, England. For more information about Liane log onto her website at www.aspie.com



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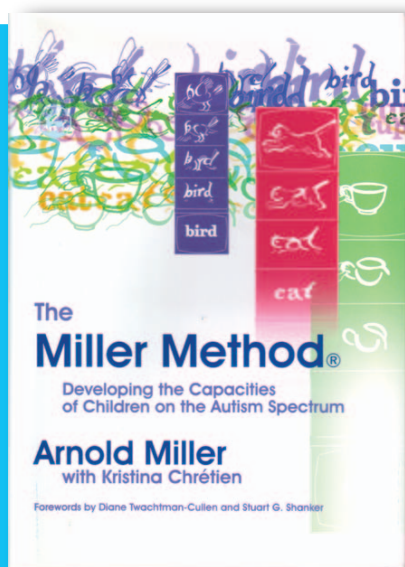
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with Kristina Chrétien

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Elevating the Child with Autism

The critically acclaimed **Miller Method®** is a veritable treasure trove of information, insights, and interventions for anyone whose life touches that of a child with autism.

It might raise some eyebrows, but Dr. Arnold Miller believes in elevating children with autism...both figuratively and literally right off the ground.

In his newest book on autism spectrum disorders, **The Miller Method®**, *Developing the Capacities of Children on the Autism Spectrum*, Miller and his colleague Kristina Chrétien present an entirely new perspective on advancing the body organization, social, and communicative skills of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs.)

Part of Miller's method includes guiding the child onto The Elevated Square, a device that gets the child off the floor and markedly diminishes toe-walking, hand flapping and aimless wandering. By creating a highly defined reality that requires the child's rapt attention to traverse it, the Elevated Square helps counter some of the significant challenges these children confront.

Another feature of the method entails the carefully gauged disruption of everyday routines. This may include deliberately "messing up" the classroom so that the children experience putting it together and learning that they can cope with disorder and change.

Working on the premise that children with ASDs learn more effectively when their whole bodies are involved, **The Miller Method®** covers major issues such as communication skills and social play, as well as day-to-day behavioral issues including tantrums, aggression and toilet training.

Written from a deep and broad clinical perspective in a language both parents and professionals can appreciate, **The Miller Method®** is part guide, part lifeline for those seeking answers to one of life's most complicated cognitive developmental puzzles.

Expert and scholarly praise for **The Miller Method®**

"Miller's newest book is transforming...it is a treasure trove of sensitive and compassionate insights along with clever and creative techniques..."

– Donald Wertlieb, Professor of Child Development, Tufts University

"...The Miller Method® offers 'a complete package' for parents and professionals... a book eminently respectful of the child with autism..."

– Diane Twachtman-Cullen, PhD, CCC-SLP, Editor-in-Chief,
Autism Spectrum Quarterly

"If ever there was a method that works with children with autism and not against their autistic tendencies, it is this method!"

...After using this method at my school for ten years, I can attest to the effectiveness of this approach."

– Christine Cook, PhD, Early Intervention Program,
William Patrick Day Center, Ohio

"...I wish The Miller Method® was around when I, a nonverbal 4-year old with autistic features recommended for institutionalization, was trying to grow up."

– Stephen M. Shore, internationally known author and consultant on issues related to autism

About the Authors

Arnold Miller, PhD, a clinical psychologist, is executive director of the Language and Cognitive Development Center of Newton, Massachusetts as well as Affiliate Professor of Psychology, Clark University. **Kristina Chrétien, MS**, works as cognitive development therapist at the Language and Cognitive Center of Newton.