

Preface

It was the '90s, and I was doing teacher training and early childhood training all over the country on behavior management and discipline. Everywhere I went teachers were all talking about the number of children in their classes who had been diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They said they had children who could not sit still, children who fidgeted, and children who could not pay attention. They pleaded for help. I resolved to learn all I could on this topic. I did lots of research, contacted other authors, and attended conferences on ADHD conducted by psychologists and psychiatrists. I even contacted drug companies to find out more about the research on the drugs to treat ADHD. In the midst of all this research, I was able to learn firsthand about ADHD through the diagnosis of two close family members. Once I felt ready, I wrote a seminar called “Succeeding With Students with ADHD.” We had standing-room-only crowds of educators all wanting to know what they could do. The more I traveled, the more I learned as I taught. Everyone wanted to share their stories about their experiences with ADHD.

Another topic, learning disorders (LD), was developed in the same way. A very dear family member had LD, so I had already researched this disorder, plus I had many children in my own early childhood centers that had difficulties learning. So many children have both ADHD and LD that it naturally followed that LD came to be included in seminars on ADHD.

As I traveled around the country giving seminars on ADHD and LD, preschool teachers started asking about children with anger management issues. They said they had never before had so many children who had tantrums and raged. I did background research and wrote another seminar, “Succeeding With Angry, Defiant, and ODD Students.” It, too, was a huge success.

At that time, very few children were diagnosed with PDD—pervasive developmental disorder; however, numbers soon increased for this as well as for bipolar disorder. Bullying also became a problem in schools. Moreover, preschool teachers complained that more and more children were misbehaving. They couldn't sit still, constantly chattered, complained, tattled, and were disruptive. I wrote a new seminar called “How

to Handle the Hard-to-Handle Student.” It incorporated ADHD, PDD, anger, defiance, ODD, bullying, bipolar disorder, Tourette syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder, and other tough classroom issues like disruptive students, tattling, constant chatter in the classroom, and classroom conflicts. Once again, teachers flocked to these seminars to learn strategies for handling these children. National associations for teachers and therapists asked me to speak at their conferences on these topics.

This book is the result of the demand for strategies to handle these hard-to-handle preschoolers. The strategies are all designed to help you help your preschool children

- Develop the ability to self-regulate whether or not an adult is present.
- Learn how to problem solve.
- Learn positive alternative behaviors to replace negative behaviors.
- Learn how to handle their emotions appropriately.
- Succeed not only in the classroom but also in life.

Each chapter begins with an explanation for each disorder or behavioral problem so that you can have a better understanding as well as recognize the symptoms. Many strategies follow the explanation. The reason there are many strategies is because no one strategy works for all children. Every child is unique. What works for one child will not necessarily work for another child, and what works for one child at one time may not work later at another time.

There is also no one strategy that works for all teachers. Teachers all have their own teaching styles, and what is comfortable for one teacher may not be comfortable for another. Each classroom is like a box of crayons. Each color crayon has its own unique beauty. Some of the crayons in the box may be shorter, some longer; some may have pointy tips, and some have been used so much that they are rounded. When these crayons are used together, they create a beautiful drawing. Your classroom is the same. Every child is like one of those crayons—unique and special. This book is packed with strategies to help you open up that crayon box and create your classroom—to unite your class into a “we” instead of a “me.”

This book is filled with stories of children and their teachers to illustrate the strategies. I have changed all of the names of these wonderful “crayons” to protect their identities. I sincerely hope that you will find this book as valuable as have the tens of thousands of people who have taken the training on which it is based. They have all taught me so much.