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Wenn Lawson, *Older Adults and Autism Spectrum Conditions: An Introduction and Guide*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2015, 208 pp., pbk £14.99, ISBN 13: 978 1 84905 961 9.

Many people are aware of, or know a child with autism; fewer people know or know of an adult with autism. Yet research suggests there are as many adults with autism today as there are children with autism. Adults with autism remain an unrecognised and under-resourced segment of the expansive ageing population. In this context, Wenn Lawson’s book, *Older Adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions: An Introduction and Guide*, is both timely and relevant. It provides a vital, practical framework to increase understanding and awareness of the unique experiences of individuals ageing with autism. As an introduction and guide, Lawson sets out to identify potential differences and difficulties older people with autism may experience, and provide valuable, informational options of support strategies for professionals and carers. The text is punctuated by subjective accounts that highlight the implications, challenges and changes over time, both for the individual and within the social environment.

The structure of the book is well balanced and informative, with each chapter concluding with a review and key points. Moreover, Lawson’s writing style goes beyond simple communication to make an effective impact for a wide audience, including professionals, carers, family members and adults ageing with autism. The content of the book covers differences that an older adult with autism may have; differences in communication ability, support needs, personality, learning styles and co-occurring mental health issues. It also covers preparing and planning for transitions and later life. Additionally, it presents insights, practical

strategies and support suggestions to minimise stress and maximise quality of life for adults ageing with autism. *Older Adults and Autism Spectrum Conditions* is the outgrowth of a life lived and learned on the autism spectrum. Lawson provides the voice of expertise and experience in an effort to raise awareness and assist professionals, those ageing with autism and those caring for them to facilitate acceptance and accommodations to physical, mental, social and environmental changes that occur with ageing.

Three key messages are distinguished in this book. The re-presenting of the paradigm of 'challenging behaviour' to that of unmet 'stress support needs' is arguably a significant contribution to enhance understanding, consideration and practice with individuals with autism. The stress and demands of coping with change can overwhelm the capabilities and communicative capacity of an individual with autism spectrum conditions (ASC), resulting in 'challenging' behaviour. Meeting an individual's stress support needs may alter behavioural outcomes. The behaviour is not the problem, the stress behind it is. The significance of such a shift in understanding and the supportive communication and accommodation strategies Lawson provides propose an improved quality of life for adults ageing with autism. Second, the necessity and emphasis of 'communication, communication, communication' is vital. Research, case studies and informed knowledge highlight the variety of communication difficulties an older adult with autism may have. Lawson presents multiple ways to communicate and adapt effectively to meet individualised communication support needs. Moreover, communicating, preparing and planning for change with older adults with ASC are underscored. Lastly, Lawson features interdependence and adaptation as key aspects in the process of thriving into older age for adults with ASC. Interdependence focuses on a person's capabilities and relationships. 'Having the right people' to provide support, the ability to 'manage the environment' and self-determination through 'having a sense of autonomy' are essential for older adults with ASC to 'age comfortably'.

In spite of the book's many strengths, a few limitations are worth mentioning. In a number of instances, what is presented is an over-generalisation about neuro-typical older adults and those with ASC. This pattern is especially evident in the sections on lack of motivation and preparing for retirement. Suggestions that neuro-typical older adults experiencing high anxiety, self-neglect and depression are aware of, and receptive to, ideas of assistance and implementation of action is over-simplified; as is having a post-retirement plan and looking forward to developing other interests. Lawson acknowledges the heterogeneity of older adults with ASC but fails to recognise the wide diversity in abilities and limitations of neuro-typical older people. In other instances, broad claims are made without supporting evidence, particularly in reference to alcohol and drug abuse being more common in older people with ASC than in the typical population. However, these limitations do not diminish the value of the book. It is informative, thought provoking and begins a much needed discourse on

the impacts of ageing and support needs of older adults with ASC. Moreover, the influence of this book should extend beyond the gaps in knowledge that it fills to stimulate awareness of, and advocacy for, adults ageing with ASC.

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