

*Behavioral Medicine
with the Developmentally
Disabled*

Behavioral Medicine with the Developmentally Disabled

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To my son, Nicholas Charles,
and my wife, Debbie
DCR

To Barbara
JHK

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Preface

Since the late 1960s, the behavioral treatment of mentally retarded, autistic, and other developmentally disabled persons has grown progressively more sophisticated. The literature on behavioral treatment has produced effective and clinically significant programs for the reduction of maladaptive behaviors such as tantrums, aggression, and self-injury; skills deficits have been remediated through improved programs for language and life skills acquisition; and new environments have been opened in the creation of mainstream educational opportunities.

In spite of these advances, it strikes us that this almost exclusive focus on behavior problems and skills remediation has been somewhat myopic and that much of the potential for application of behavioral science to solving problems of the developmentally disabled is as yet untapped.

In the 1980s, an important revolution has taken place: the development of the field of behavioral medicine. This field, in merging disease treatment and management with learning and behavior, has already made impressive progress toward a reconceptualization of health care that acknowledges the centrality of behavior in disease expression. Although there has, as yet, been only a preliminary application of this reconceptualization to the field of developmental disabilities, we are convinced that further extension has great potential.

This volume is therefore dedicated to exploring the potential and utility of an integration of the fields of behavioral medicine and developmental disabilities. To accomplish this, we have invited individuals whose research and clinical practice are representative of this integration to review existing experimental work, speculate on future applications, and provide guidance and stimulation to new arrivals to the field. The reader may find that the contents of this book do not cover all possible areas of interface between behavioral medicine and developmental disabilities. Rather, we have selected topics in which a sufficient body of

empirical knowledge or clinical expertise has accrued to allow for meaningful review and speculation.

We have subsumed the contents of this volume under three major headings: symptom management, assessment, and educative interventions. Because of the emerging character of the field, each specific area of application (e.g., prevention, feeding disorders, assessment of pharmacotherapy) is represented by both a primary contribution and one or more briefer, supplementary chapters, designed to provide additional perspective. We feel that this format of counterpoint and dialogue well reflects the evolving nature of behavioral medicine.

We wish to thank, in particular, Judy Favell and Richard Foxx, former coeditors of *Analysis and Intervention in Developmental Disabilities*, with whose support the initial idea for this book was conceived. Our deepest gratitude goes as well to Lynda Ferguson, who coordinated its assembly. We are hopeful that the reader will find these chapters instructive and a rich basis for future work in this evolving area.

Dennis C. Russo
Jurgen H. Kedesdy

Boston

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