



Resource review

Bowen, C. & Snow, P. (2017). *Making sense of interventions for children with developmental disorders: A guide for parents and professionals*. J&R Press: Surrey, UK. AU\$45.00 <http://www.sandpiperpublications.com.au/Making-Sense-of-Interventions-scp100568.html>; £24.99 <http://www.jr-press.co.uk/making-sense-of-interventions-for-childrens-developmental-disorders.html>

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Increased access to the internet and social media means families (and clinicians) are often bombarded by adverts and information about possible treatments for their child. It has become increasingly difficult to “make sense” of everything we hear and read about. Thank goodness for the recently published guide for parents and professionals from Caroline Bowen and Pamela Snow which provides us with a road map.

In this on-line world, it is easy to find “evidence” for anything and everything. However, as the authors caution “there is no binary distinction between ‘evidence-based’ and ‘non evidence-based’ practice” (p. 10), rather it is a case of having levels of evidence. The text is book-ended by useful general chapters on understanding science and research. I like the way it promotes scientific literacy and critical thinking, but also reminds us to keep an open mind. The text is readable, written in plain English with an often humorous style. Towards the end, a 7-point “safety check” is provided for parents to use as they navigate the market place.

The second chapter takes a side road into the booming business of accelerating the development of typically developing babies. Read this chapter in the privacy of your own home or clinic as you will gasp, gulp, and at times find yourself laughing out loud in incredulity at some of the products on offer!

The remaining chapters cover the well-worn paths of executive control, working memory and attention; autism spectrum disorders; behaviour and social development;

AAC, voice, speech, language and fluency; auditory processing; reading; and diet. The authors present a little bit about each of these areas of practice, and discuss criteria that identify a recommended intervention (in other words, a theoretical underpinning that make sense in explaining *why* a treatment should work and evidence of a reasonable level that has shown it *does*).

Each chapter then winds its way through a description of a range of moderate to non- evidence-based approaches. Some you may have heard of but there will be times when

readers will find it hard to believe the authors haven’t made some of these up. To list a few, and in no particular order:

- “psychological astrology” which uses birth charts to understand the inner world of those who cannot communicate (seriously, this exists);
- “kill your stutter” and “kill your lisp” (apparently in just minutes... but of course, after you have downloaded a program at some considerable expense); and
- “facilitated communication” which has a strong evidence base that it is “not an efficacious means of accessing the wants, needs, thoughts and ideas of people with severe communication impairment” (p. 165).

Many of these non-EBP programs do not just come with an absence of evidence (which might suggest we watch with caution if there is at least some solid underlying theory, and hence face validity), but rather have clear evidence that they do not work. Clinicians need to consider that the interventions they provide should not only aim to do good, but also to do no harm. Our ethical obligations include the notion of “opportunity cost” – so every minute wasted on a non-EB approach is one that hasn’t been used to a child’s advantage. Everyone involved in working with a child should ensure their program is based in the best science.

The twitter handle associated with this book (@Tx choices) summarises its purpose – a critically important one: to provide parents, carers, families, and professionals with access to the information and tools which are needed to make informed choices for and with their children. There should be a copy in every clinic.

