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**Alan Rushton and Helen Upright, *Enhancing adoptive parenting: A parenting programme for use with new adopters of challenging children.***

Maggie Jackson

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[What is This?](#)

The authors have considered feedback from the book's first edition and increased the examples of narratives. This is particularly evident towards the end of the book where the final chapter is devoted solely to examples. This leaves the reader with a sense of confidence and optimism that both children and families lives can be changed and improved through the tradition of story-telling.

Alan Rushton and Helen Upright, *Enhancing adoptive parenting: A parenting programme for use with new adopters of challenging children*. London: BAAF, 2012, 64 pp. plus CD-ROM, £19.95, ISBN 9781907585425.

**Reviewed by:** Maggie Jackson, Teesside University, England

This book is a handbook for use with new adopters. It offers a programme of structured sessions which are designed to take place over a 10-week period in the adopters' home with an adoption support worker. Specific areas covered in the programme are:

Attachment

Changing behaviours and developing new relationships

Special play

Verbal praise and rewards

Clear commands and boundaries

Ignoring and

Effective discipline and problem solving.

An 'optional extras' section covers issues such as bed wetting, soiling and sexualised behaviour.

A CD-Rom is provided which has a set of handouts for use with each session.

The handbook has been devised following a small scale study using a version of this training programme with new adopters and has been post tested with six new adopters. The stated aims of the programme are to 'support the stability of the adoptive placement; to reduce the level of child problems; to enhance parenting skills and understanding; and to improve relationships' (p. 4). It is aimed at those who have adopted children between the ages of 3 and 8 and the authors suggest each session takes 90 min. Page 6 offers clear advice on who is the intended deliverer of the programme, but makes it clear that they need to have a high level of competence and understanding and to be well supervised and supported by a practice consultant. This is not meant to be a book you can take off the shelf and use without doing some serious work and training with your staff before you use it. This is not a criticism rather to say that this is a clearly thought out handbook that recognises the work it is supporting is complex and needs 'experienced adoption or family workers familiar with the adoption process' (p. 6) to deliver it.

In terms of its aims and its target audience the handbook is clearly set out and well organised. It gives a clear shape and structure to each session and picks up on useful themes for new adopters. There is a short but useful list of references, which I think would be crucial to access before undertaking this programme as the level of support and expertise of the 'parent adviser' (as they are termed within the handbook) is key to this programme. The supervision they also suggest must be an integral part of the successful delivery of this programme so that the advisers can go back and discuss and consult on issues that arise from each session. The handbook only gives a basic explanation of the issues discussed and so cannot be used on its own without first having a sound knowledge of child development and child welfare issues.

The handouts that are contained on the CD-Rom are perhaps the least interesting part of this handbook. They consist of charts which I feel are too long and seem to be very similar for each session. I think a good worker could make their own and make them more interesting. The handouts in the optional extras section do, however, have pieces of key information on them, which would at least be useful to leave with the adoptive parents to consult.

I can imagine that this is a useful book to have available to help design and structure support sessions. I think the sequence of the sessions is logical and clear. Experienced workers could adapt some of the materials to fit their specific situations more fully, but this should not be bought and used without being aware that it needs serious commitment to the advisers to allow it to be effective. Nonetheless, I think those working in adoption would find it useful to put on their shelves.