

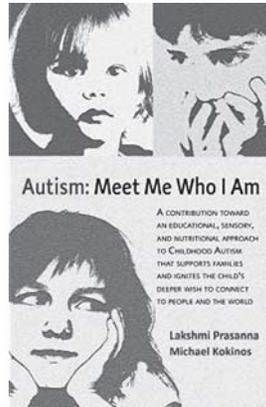
Autism: Meet Me Who I Am, An Educational, Sensory and Nutritional Approach to Childhood Autism

by Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos
Lindisfarne Books, 2018
Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

When talking about children in our classrooms who challenge and perplex us, it is becoming almost commonplace to hear phrases like, “He’s somewhere on the spectrum.” The image of the autism spectrum peppers the media, internet, medical publications, and educational reporting, and lives daily in the wrenched hearts of parents who are companioning these special children in earthly life.

Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos, presenters at the 2018 WECAN February Conference, brought pictures of their work with young children and adolescents with autism in their keynote presentations (summarized elsewhere in this issue of *Gateways*). They describe communication—through both language and behavior—as the path to opening up the world of the child with autism. Relationship infused with acceptance, warmth, and love between human beings is key to establishing a communication bridge to meeting the other. The spiritual individuality of the other, hidden within a cumbersome, nonintegrated physical body, can be recognized and honored. The inspiration offered by their keynotes was profound for those who attended the conference. Their suggestions of how to relate to the autistically inclined child were both deep and subtle.

Fortunately, Dr. Lakshmi and Michael have produced *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am*, which further



describes their journey to a better understanding of these children. They chronicle how their acceptance of remarkable children has opened a doorway to fill “the space in-between”—that can be either a barrier or a bridge—with warmth and connection. This book offers practical and accessible insights into the world of autism, a phenomenon we are all struggling to understand. The numbers of “spectrum” children coming to our classes is rising, so this can be a very useful guide to how to support the child and class and respond to behaviors.

But this book is also recommended reading for all Waldorf early childhood educators, because the steps described as the “Five Key Ideas” (Prasanna and Kokinos, *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am*, p. 95) are applicable to every child in our care.

- Strive to meet the child in their essence
- Environmental management rather than behavior management
- Start with nutrition: support the liver and digestion (and also with healthy rhythms)
- Help the child with body image and [sensory] perception
- Build a ... community [of support] including parents

We might say that our world is becoming autistic—or already is, as these children are coming to show us. Experience comes to us in sharp bits and pieces, fast and loud, with little rhythm or organizing principle. Through so many ways we are being distracted, blocked from making authentic connection with other human beings. Our social life is being crippled. If these Key Ideas are helpful for the child with autism, they are likely also healing for everyone.

Creating relationship and authentic, meaningful connection with the other is a profound challenge of our time. The openness of these authors, one a doctor and one a therapist, to be guided by these special children bears benefit for us all. ♦