remember that students with AS are extremely literal and will have difficulties with the complexity of our language (e.g., sarcasm, humor). “We need to remember that they don’t have access to our rich internal imagery, or natural ability to be flexible and imaginative in their use of language” (p. 201). The section continues with discussions on the unique obstacles to learning and recommendations for modifications in the classroom that facilitate a more rewarding school experience for students and teachers alike. Parents and teachers involved with autistic children will benefit greatly from the advice offered in this section.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and believe anyone interested in the development of children (physicians, psychologists, teachers, and parents) would find this book valuable. It is not often that I come across a text that brings together information from so many noted clinicians, includes the many facets of a disorder, shows how to better meet the needs of the unique individuals with the disorder, and is compiled into a user-friendly format. If only the textbooks from medical school could be read as easily and enjoyably.

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**Why Love Matters: How Affection Shapes a Baby’s Brain.**

Since John Bowlby first introduced the attachment model three decades ago, the importance of a secure parent–infant relationship on human development has been widely recognized and studied. For many of us, however, it is not yet clear how early parenting can induce changes in brain development that can be related to later psychological problems. This is what Sue Gerhardt sets out to elucidate in her book, *Why Love Matters*. Using evidence made possible by recent technical advances in neuroscience, the author shows that adverse early experience with parents can lead to long-term impairment in the brain and that a loving parent-child relationship really does matter for psychological well-being.

Rather than being full of unnecessary jargon, this book is written in an easy language intended for a broad range of readers, even those without a background in neuroscience. Despite the simplicity of language, this book goes into considerable depth. Gerhardt reviews a great deal of literature covering the importance of different brain areas and neuroendocrine systems important for mediating parenting effects on babies, as well as psychopathological disorders that may develop when there is neglect or abuse. Gerhardt begins by pointing out how plastic human babies’ brains are as they constantly interact with the outside world. Their brains go through a “pruning process,” a rewiring of connections that are either fortified or removed according to external stimuli. Gerhardt illustrates the effects of parenting on the development of the orbitofrontal cortex (OBFC), which she also refers to as the “social brain,” and which plays a critical role in emotion regulation and social interaction. Although warm and responsive parenting during the first year of a baby’s life may contribute to the normal development of the OBFC, cold and unresponsive parenting hampers it. Such structural and functional variations in the OBFC can lead to more difficulties in emotion regulation and social life as babies grow older. Furthermore, the OBFC is linked with hypothalamus, the area responsible for the regulation of the stress hormone cortisol. Gerhardt explains that being completely dependent on their parents during the first 12 months of life, babies experience high stress when their caregivers are unresponsive and inconsistent. The lack of emotional security and of normal development of the OBFC can lead to chronically abnormal cortisol responses, which may in turn lead to longer-term difficulties in stress regulation.

In addition to the readable physiological review, Gerhardt presents numerous clinical anecdotes. She is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and takes advantage of her experience to include actual cases of people with various psychological problems that may be attributed to impaired brain development under negative early experiences with their parents. One of the cases is about people having grown up with a depressed mother whose parenting style tends to be less responsive and neglectful: Studies have found in these people a higher cortisol level and fewer cortical receptors, making them more susceptible to stress and prone to depression. Gerhardt introduces other cases in which babies are exposed to sexual abuse by their parents. These babies are more likely to have a disorganized attachment style, characterized by fast shifts between approach and avoidance with others, and eventually subject to higher rates of borderline and narcissistic personality disorders and posttraumatic stress disorder. Moving back to the physiology, the author discusses how this is supported by neurological findings in people with posttraumatic stress disorder in which the hippocampus, the brain region responsible for event evaluation, is relatively smaller in
volume. They also exhibit abnormal regulation of cortisol levels and poor functioning of emotional circuitry that involves the OBFC. Babies under coercive parenting have an avoidant attachment style, which may explain their higher tendency to develop antisocial behavioral problems. They are found to have a smaller OBFC and higher cortisol levels.

Gerhardt does a decent job connecting parenting styles during infancy with psychological problems much later in life; however, she leaves the larger questions of what may happen in between and how to best address these problems entirely out of the book. These are questions that research-oriented child and adolescent psychiatrists are just starting to address and of critical importance to guide treatment interventions.

Toward the end of the book, Gerhardt attempts to offer suggestions addressing the importance of the early parent–child relationship. She does not simply say that parents should stay home and devote their entire time to taking care of their babies. Instead, she leads us to recognize how stressful it is to be a parent, especially when one is unprepared. She suggests a viable solution will require participation by the greater society. In fact, early parental preoccupation and stress, which to some extent are a normal part of parent–infant bonding (Mayes et al., 2005), may be more problematic in circumstances of poverty, war, or parental mental illness. This underlines the importance of Gerhardt’s discussion of the needs for intervention and policy designed specifically to support positive parenting for the sake of future generations. For anyone who has an interest in the intricate relationship between the brain, mind, and behavior from a developmental perspective, this book offers a wonderful read.

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To understand why this chaotic, poorly researched rant about motherhood has become a national bestseller, it is important to distinguish between Warner’s accurate description of the perfect madness that has overwhelmed and distorted the experience of motherhood for some middle- and upper middle-class mothers and her allocation of blame for this problem. From the start, Warner clearly describes feelings with which many privileged women are achingly familiar: the pressure to be a “perfect” mother. Today’s definition of perfect has much in common with the perfect mother of the 1950s—that domestic goddess par excellence—but is compounded by the push to be available, stimulating, and otherwise developmentally facilitating to their offspring: the perfect play date, the perfect birthday party, the perfect babysitter (who not only loves the child and provides him or her with just the right levels of cognitive stimulation but perhaps teaches him or her a second language as well). This can often be carried to ridiculous extremes, with women feeling that only if they subsume all of their other desires and interests are they being good enough parents. Warner correctly points out that such preoccupations really interfere with the quality of women’s lives: Indeed, it is no way to live. Warner further accurately notes, based on her own experience living and raising children in France, that there are other Western cultures that are far more supportive of motherhood in general and of women’s complex needs to find fulfillment in work and other relationships in particular.

My suspicion is that many of the women who bought, read, and raved about this book to their friends read only the first few chapters, which nicely lay out what Warner describes as the “mess” of motherhood among today’s affluent mothers, although it must be emphasized (which Warner barely does) that many women of privilege do not fall prey to this kind of internal pressure. But when they do occur, such preoccupations are certainly a function of choice and privilege; women with fewer choices are far less likely to choose to stay up all night making the costumes for their child’s kindergarten play or be driven to seek the “right” play date for their child’s social and emotional development. It is after these opening chapters that the book really falls apart. Struggling to find a reason for this “mess” (and in my opinion failing to look in any of the right places), Warner quickly lapses into a diatribe that is full of rampant overgeneralization, utter misrepresentation of primary sources (of which there are woefully few), and extreme examples of maternal overachievement that even the most driven and ambitious parents would reject as bizarre and out of the realm of the ordinary. She suggests, for example, that Andrea Yates was driven to drown her children in part because she could not live up to the ideals of perfect motherhood. Andrea Yates drowned her children because she was mentally ill, in particular,