



KLARYSA ŚWIEŻEK

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**Tara Leniston, Rhian Grounds *Dom oswojony.
Jak stworzyć bezpieczną przestrzeń dla dziecka z ASD*
[*Tamed house. How to create a safe space for a child with ASD*]
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The reviewed book was written by two women who wish to support people working with children with autistic spectrum disorders. Tara Leniston is the mother of three children. In 2011, her two-year-old son Dylan was diagnosed with ASD. Rhian Grounds is a speech and language therapist working with children and young people with ASD. The first author shares her experience of raising a child with ASD. She invites the readers to her home and shows them around the house, sharing practical advice and ideas that have supported her family since Dylan's diagnosis. Rhian Grounds provides many therapeutic guidelines that she has used in her work with people with autistic spectrum disorders over the years. She encourages a holistic view of each child and cooperation between other professionals with whom the child has contact.

The book *Tamed house. How to create a safe space for a child with ASD* consists of eight chapters. The unique form of the book gives the reader the impression that they are being shown around the family house and the immediate vicinity of a person with an autistic disorder. The titles of the chapters are the names of the rooms in the house or places close to the person with ASD such as the kitchen, bathroom and so on.

We can find a pattern in each chapter. Tara Leniston, Dylan's mother is the first to speak (the boy's father also speaks in the first chapter, which is an exception). The second part of each chapter is written by speech and

language therapist Rhian Grounds. The chapters end with short summaries containing the most important conclusions. It is important that each chapter describes the experiences of the mother and the therapist, the facts about the functioning of children with ASD, and provides many practical solutions that can make life easier for the family of Persons with ASD. The first area described is the *Parents' corner*, which is an essential element in any home to maintain good relationships between the parents. The shared responsibility for communication within the family is worth noting. The authors also provide elements important for a good exchange of information: methods of communication, reasons for wanting to make contact or the situation and its participants. The therapist proposes to create a *personal passport* for a child with ASD so that other people who work with the child get to know how to communicate, support, how the child perceives the world and its preferences and fears. At the end of this chapter, the role of positive silencing techniques is explained, and a proposal to shape socially unacceptable behaviour into acceptable one is presented, e.g. throwing objects is replaced by throwing balls into a basket. Already in the first chapter, the authors focus on the emotional sphere, offering to familiarise children with their emotions during everyday activities and, at the same time, to recognize them (by every family member). In the second chapter, Tara Leniston describes the *Bedrooms*. She draws attention to activities that support healthy sleep, presenting an environment that helps to rest, pointing out the difference between the needs of children with ASD. The therapist, in turn, lists the ways in which you can learn about the child's sensory preferences and how to adapt to their environment. She suggests an ABC approach (noting the preceding circumstances) to highlight the role of observation. This chapter also explains the sensory complexities of a child with ASD, highlighting insensibility or hypersensitivity. She also underlines the role of pre-sleep routine activities (Dylan's mother presents an *evening plan of action*). Finally, the TEACCH method is presented, which helps to spend time productively, after which the child wants to fall asleep. The third room presented by the authors is the *Kitchen*. This chapter praises meal time, when both parents and children experience different emotions. It is often in this room that communication situations are created naturally. Allowing the child to make a choice, e.g. using the PECS system, is a sign of respect for his or her preferences and needs. The therapist also explains the hierarchy of suggestions which is useful when offering different types of food. Both authors draw attention to the positive influence of coopera-

tion with a child, e.g. preparing meals together. They also address the issue of diets or special supplements, but stress that they can only be introduced under the doctor's supervision, after examination. The proposal to consult the website of the organisation Research Autism, where it is possible, for example, to check the influence of a specific diet or supplements on people with ASD is also noteworthy. Dylan's mother offers solutions to help with furnishing and designing the kitchen, e.g. installing additional safety devices at drawers with knives. The next chapter four offers a guided tour of the *Playroom*. The authors present a list of the ten best toys, which includes a trampoline or a sensory box. It presents ways to develop a child's games, their different types and value in development. This chapter also describes how to develop communication during play. Not only when your child is playing with an adult, but also with peers or siblings. Then we take a look at the *Bathroom*, which offers solutions for children learning to use the toilet or take a bath, both for those who can imitate and those who cannot. This part of the publication presents many proposals for step-by-step planning of a child's bathing activities. In chapter six we are shown around the *Living Room*, where each member of the household can find an interesting activity for themselves. The authors stress that when spending time in the living room, everyone should develop their interests or passions. At the end of this part the authors discuss proposals for spending free time such as: games, movement games or the use of new technologies. The last area of the house discussed by the authors is the garden and a similar place, the balcony. In chapter seven, therapies, e.g. hippo therapy, are introduced. The potential to create a sensory corner with different plants such as flowers, herbs or shrubs in the garden, on the balcony or even on the window sill has been recognised. In the last chapter, the authors take the readers out to the shop, to a family meeting or on a car or plane trip. The role of planning in advance and familiarising the child with ASD with the plan is emphasised. Rhian Grouds draws attention to how people with ASD are perceived by the public, particularly how they are described. She focuses on the value of the used words, and encourages the description of children with autism spectrum disorders by specifying the support that a particular person requires. In conclusion, the therapist introduces alternative and supportive communication methods.

Throughout the publication, great importance is attached to activities that support communication and good interaction at every step (in every place in the house and outside). The authors emphasise that the actions will

only be effective if they are implemented by all the people surrounding a child with ASD. The narrative used is also important, as it is always a reminder that those who work with children with autistic spectrum disorders are not alone, but can seek advice from specialists such as doctors and therapists. People from the whole spectrum of autistic disorders are considered, which is a positive thing, starting with those who need a lot of support in many areas of life to those who are practically independent, for whom social functioning is a challenge. Many of the solutions proposed can be tailored to the individual needs of children with ASD. The publication places great importance on the communication and emotional sphere, describing the strength and value of gestures, closeness and spending time with the child. An example is the evening plan of actions prepared by Dylan's mother, in which one of the many important elements are "good night kisses", reading together or discussing the plan for the next day. The book presents many examples that enable a better understanding of the issues raised, e.g. perception of sensory stimuli. The authors share many practical ideas with their readers, e.g. *a peace box, a personal passport, reference items* and even recipes (e.g. for magic cookies). At the same time, they show a wide spectrum of autistic disorders, discuss various scenarios of types of behaviour. This publication proposes to broaden the knowledge of the issues raised, providing the titles of books or even addresses of websites with articles. The authors encourage people to get to know the point of view of People with ASD, for example, by reaching for Grandin Temple's or Stephen Wiltshire's books. They present a number of practical solutions that deserve our attention, but also confirm their application by referring to scientific research. In summary, in this publication, Tara Leniston and Rhian Grounds have attempted to analyse and organise the immediate space of children with ASD. They have looked at the house, the garden and shorter or longer trips.

Unfortunately, Dylan's father was given only one chance to speak in this work. It would have been valuable to know his opinion on the issues raised. In the only comment he made he pointed out that he felt excluded from contact with his son, so it would be interesting to know his perspective. There is also the risk of following the advice from this book too literally, especially concerning the decor elements of the rooms, e.g. providing all rooms with soft carpets or lamps made of Himalayan salt lumps. It would be worth stressing, especially at the beginning of the publication, that these are proposals which need to be adjusted to the needs of a particular person with ASD.

The book is written in a language that is understandable for the parents. If there are any difficult specialist terms, their definitions are provided. It is also aimed at professionals who have the opportunity to get to know the everyday reality of carers and a specialist who has worked with people with ASD for many years in London and Wales. The subject matter covered by the authors is important and topical. The book is unique because it offers many practical solutions, which include concrete advice or even plans for coping with difficult tasks such as teaching the child to use the toilet or travelling by plane. I consider this publication worth recommending and propose it in particular to people who are not indifferent to the fate of persons with autistic spectrum disorders. This book proves that with the right preparation children with ASD can do the same things that neurotypical children do. It also inspires the readers to introduce new solutions that make the functioning of people with ASD easier in the “tamed” closest space.