

Summary

The book addresses the issue of participation in sensory integration therapy (SIT), which has been growing in popularity among various therapeutic approaches since the 1970s, despite the skeptical attitude of scientific communities researching the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions that meet the criteria of evidence-based practices (EBP). The noticeable popularity of SI approach accompanied by serious doubts and even skepticism among researchers, constitutes two distinct and opposing discourses, whose resonance has been recognized as a social phenomenon worth exploring. Another reason for addressing that topic is that the lack of clear conclusions regarding the (ir)relevance of SI therapy was also noted as a serious difficulty in the daily practice of physicians, specialists, and parents caring for children with sensory processing difficulties.

This monograph presents a comprehensive description of the SIT approach, including its theoretical frameworks and practical applications, a list of related controversies, and the stages of its evolution. It describes contemporary assumptions and applications of SIT, its place among other forms of therapy, and standards for diagnosis, therapy, and evaluation of the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions in the SI approach in accordance with the latest scientific knowledge. The book also emphasizes the obligation of SI therapists to comply with ethical standards in their work. Its second part presents the author's own research using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) into the meanings that individuals (mothers) ascribe to their experiences related to participation in the processes of diagnosis and therapy using the SI method. The rich description of these experiences and the interpretation of the expressed meanings allowed for a deeper understanding of the motives and attitudes of parents who decide to enroll their children in the (sometimes questioned) SI therapy.

The book is the only available Polish compendium of current psychological knowledge on this socially important phenomenon. It includes an extensive report on the first scientific studies conducted in Poland, identifying broad psychological and socio-cultural reasons for undertaking SI therapy, indicating important aspects of parenting and upbringing, as well as trends and educational models popular in current culture and society. Additionally, it offers the first comprehensive and structured review of scientific and popular science knowledge on the subject.

Also addressed is the important and topical issue of critical verification of the therapeutic interventions. Parents, as persons responsible for their children and faced with difficult choices, will find guidelines on how to choose a SI therapist for their child, when to seek help in the form of SI therapy, and how to verify the effectiveness of the actions taken by specialists. For those planning to train in the area of diagnosis and therapy using the SI method, the publication offers up-to-date and reliable knowledge along with valuable discussion of its practical implications, as well as making future SI therapists deeply aware of the need to evaluate their work, which is a necessary component of the professional activity of a therapist meeting the highest standards.

The book provides evidence of the validity of the SI approach; at the same time, it characterizes areas in which the use of this method is not justified. It is also the first comprehensive study with methodologically rigorous research tools which debunks myths arising from the perception of SI therapy by communities that rarely use it in practice. It provides a better understanding of the phenomenon that is the popularity of the SI method in a specific socio-cultural context, showing how contemporary educational trends influence the decisions made by parents. It also discusses practical implications for specialists working with children and families, as well as parents, teachers, physicians, and all professionals who seek a better understanding of SI therapy by referring to the latest scientific knowledge.