



# Essentials

## of **Adaptive Behavior Assessment of Neurodevelopmental Disorders**

- A practical guide for assessing adaptive behavior
- Expert advice on interpreting profiles of adaptive functioning
- Conveniently formatted for Rapid Reference

**Celine A. Saulnier**  
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# **Essentials of Adaptive Behavior Assessment of Neurodevelopmental Disorders**

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# Essentials

## of Adaptive Behavior Assessment of Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Celine A. Saulnier  
Cheryl Klaiman

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## SERIES PREFACE

In the Essentials of Psychological Assessment series, we have attempted to provide the reader with books that will deliver key practical information in the most efficient and accessible style. The series features instruments in a variety of domains, such as cognition, personality, education, and neuropsychology. For the experienced clinician, books in the series will offer a concise yet thorough way to master use of the continually evolving supply of new and revised instruments as well as a convenient method for keeping up-to-date on the tried-and-true measures. The novice will find here a prioritized assembly of all the information and techniques that must be at one's fingertips to begin the complicated process of individual psychological diagnosis.

Whenever feasible, visual shortcuts to highlight key points are used alongside systematic, step-by-step guidelines. Chapters are focused and succinct. Topics are targeted for an easy understanding of the essentials of administration, scoring, interpretation, and clinical application. Theory and research are continually woven into the fabric of each book, but always to enhance clinical inference, never to sidetrack or overwhelm. We have long been advocates of “intelligent” testing—the notion that a profile of test scores is meaningless unless it is brought to life by the clinical observations and astute detective work of knowledgeable examiners. Test profiles must be used to make a difference in the child's or adult's life, or why bother to test? We want this series to help our readers become the best intelligent testers they can be.

In *Essentials of Adaptive Behavior Assessment of Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, the authors underscore the universal role that adaptive behavior plays to functional independence across many neurodevelopmental disorders. The authors review various standardized measures of adaptive behavior and how to best assess for areas of strengths and weaknesses that can be translated into treatment and intervention goals. Case examples are provided to illustrate profiles of adaptive

functioning that are often prognostic indicators for specific disorders. The end goal is to provide the reader with an understanding that adaptive behavior is modifiable and strongly predictive of optimal outcome into adulthood.

Dr. Alan Kaufman and Dr. Nadeen Kaufman

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measures of adaptive behavior into the assessment of individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Finally, we would like to thank the children and families who inspire and teach us every day. Thank you for contributing to our clinical and scientific knowledge of neurodevelopmental disorders.

## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY OF ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR

### INTRODUCTION

The construct of adaptive behavior is defined as the independent performance of daily activities that are required for personal and social sufficiency (Sparrow, Cicchetti, & Saulnier, 2016). This is qualitatively different from intelligence, which is conceptualized more as a repertoire of skills that is innate or acquired over time. This book provides a comprehensive overview of profiles of adaptive behavior seen across neurodevelopmental disorders. Though there are many distinct or complex and multiplex causes for neurodevelopmental complications that result in extremely heterogeneous presentations, the delays or deficits in practical, “real-life” skills are the common thread throughout these disorders. Moreover, positive outcome is often associated with adaptive functioning and, as such, interventions to target adaptive behavior can be successful in an individual’s ability to attain levels of independence in life.

### DON'T FORGET

If cognition or IQ is an individual's repertoire of skills or capacity to perform a given behavior; adaptive behavior is an individual's independent performance of the behavior when life demands it.

### THE BIRTH OF ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR

When measures of cognitive ability were introduced in the early 1900s, the classification of intellectual disability (ID) relied solely on the assessment of intelligence quotient (IQ). Henry Herbert Goddard was one of the first to bring comprehensive intelligence tests to the United States when he translated

and modified the Binet Intelligence Scale that was developed in France by Alfred Binet (Zenderland, 2001). Goddard's version, the Binet and Simon Tests of Intellectual Capacity, was published in 1908. At the time, Goddard was working as the research director at the Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys in Vineland, New Jersey, seeking ways to accurately assess children with IDs. The Vineland Training School was dedicated to the study of ID and, thus, defining and measuring intelligence became a strong focus.

Goddard defined feeble-mindedness as mental deficits originating at birth or early in development that resulted in an individual's incapacity for functioning independently in society (Goddard, 1914). The following labels were designated based on levels of cognitive impairment:

- *Idiot* designated a person with a mental age up to 2 years
- *Imbecile* designated a 3–7 years mental age
- *Morons* designated a 7–12 years mental age (though still designating cognitive delay, these individuals were not regarded as “defective” or “incapable of learning”)

Goddard, similar to many of his time, believed in the heritable nature of feeble-mindedness, publishing a book about a family with mental retardation that crossed generations (Goddard, 1912). The notion that cognitive impairment was inherited reinforced the eugenics movement—one of selective breeding and sterilization in an attempt to eliminate undesired traits and maximize desired ones. This resulted in the institutionalization, sterilization, and limited immigration of many individuals with ID in the United States so as to increase the average IQ. These practices would not be fully eradicated until the 1960s and, thus, intelligence tests remained at the forefront of identifying the cognitively inferior, including children (Reilly, 1987). Despite the controversy surrounding his early involvement in the eugenics movement, Goddard is considered one of the founders of intelligence testing in our country and, in some regards, of the field of clinical psychology (Gelb, 1999).

During Goddard's tenure at the Vineland Training School, he had an assistant named Edgar Doll. Doll had recently received his bachelor's degree from Cornell University and began working with Goddard as a clinical psychologist. Doll believed that level of impairment was dependent on one's limited ability to meet designated social expectations, highlighting the necessity of social competence for functional independence (Doll, 1936). He therefore advocated that social criteria be established against which to measure intelligence. In 1917, Doll