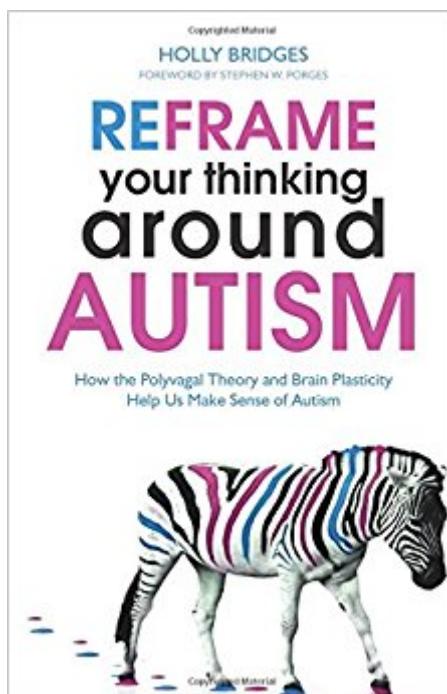


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# Reframe Your Thinking Around Autism: How The Polyvagal Theory And Brain Plasticity Help Us Make Sense Of Autism



## **Synopsis**

Outlining a new, optimistic way to understand autism, this concise and accessible book offers practical ideas to help children on the spectrum grow. The Polyvagal Theory suggests autism is a learnt response by the body - a result of the child being in a prolonged state of 'fight or flight' while their nervous system is still developing. This book explains the theory in simple terms and incorporates recent developments in brain plasticity research (the capacity of the brain to change throughout life) to give parents and professionals the tools to strengthen the child's brain-body connection and lessen the social and emotional impact of autism.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Holly Bridges' passion and compassion has led her to connect to children on the autism spectrum and to look to help them from where they are in their world. I am thrilled that she is offering the 9 Essentials of the Anat Baniel Method as a science-based NeuroMovement(R) approach to generate positive impact on these children's brains, in their lives and the lives of their families. Holly can inspire all of us with her love, dedication, receptiveness to new ideas and open mind. -- Anat Baniel, founder of the Anat Baniel Method and author of 'Kids Beyond Limits' Reframe Your Thinking Around Autism is a succinctly written book with engaging graphics that provides a new optimistic approach to conceptualize autism. Rather than focusing on the clinical diagnostic tools that have been used to define autism, Holly Bridges focuses on linking many of the compromised functions that are experienced by autistics to features of the Polyvagal Theory, a theory I developed. Using

the Polyvagal Theory as an organizing principle she introduces a variety of intervention models that potentially could function as neural exercises (i.e. brain plasticity) to rehabilitate the social engagement system and to optimize autonomic regulation. This unique and readable book effectively connects to the families and the people who directly interact with individuals with autism. -- Stephen W. Porges, PhD, Professor of Psychiatry, University of North Carolina and author of 'The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation' Holly Bridges writes with an absolute clarity and vision about her subject. I liken her to a seamstress, sewing back in the missing pieces, and pulling the threads together that have limited our autistic model. For all the knowledge and understanding that a lot of people in this field offer, there is a big gap in this area. There is always so much more to learn on this journey, but applying this knowledge and seeing real changes happen, is heart-warming, encouraging and inspiring! -- Ceri Wood B.A., parent of a child with autism

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applying this knowledge and seeing real changes happen, is heart-warming, encouraging and inspiring! (Ceri Wood B.A., parent of a child with autism)

What a wonderful book! "Autism is like being given a scratchy jumper from your Granny. While all the other kids in the playground are off running and jumping in the playground, the autist is stuck dealing with Granny's itchy jumper." Thank you, Holly Bridges. This book explaining polygaval theory and brain plasticity as a way of understanding autism is no scratchy jumper - it is a warm, supportive hug. Recommended for parents.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I was able to absorb some of the new science behind autism in a way that was easy for me to understand. Along the way I also learnt more about myself and my own behaviours. This book is enlightening reading for anyone interested in the puzzle that is autism. I work with families and young children and am looking forward to applying some of the insights in my own working life.

Lovely book! A wonderful perspective on autism backed by science. I have read this book several times and every time found it inspiring. The best thing about this book is that it has so much valuable information and packed in a small book. It is easy to read. It makes you think of autism as a gift and an opportunity rather than something to worry about.

Very thought provoking, very helpful!!!

A nice, easy read. Good to get the main ideas without having to buy the big text.

This is a useful text for those who parent teach or interact with those on the Spectrum.

I am shocked to see these positive reviews, because it is rare that a book on a serious and scientific subject is so poorly researched and substantiated and contains so many a priori assumptions. I really hardly know where to start. We can start with the claim that we believe that autism is in the brain because, as humans, we have a need to believe we are cleverer than any other animal. But "...autists are generally really smart. They might not be able to communicate this to you [...] but they are still in there, thinking, creating and designing with their wonderful brains. So if it's not the brain..." (Bridges, pg. 17). Unpacking that a bit, because autists think (whatever that means - it isn't

defined, as no term is defined in the book), autism cannot be "in the brain." Bridges goes so far as to claim that "Some people like to look in the brain for answers. But they haven't found any. Others like to look to genetics for the reasons why people have it. But they haven't found any. Autism has everyone stumped" (Bridges 14). Except this is not true. It denies the existence of a rich body of research that have found a great deal. None of it is accounted for. None of it shows up in the "bibliography" - an embarrassingly modest affair for a book that makes such sweeping claims. It includes a few autobiographies from autistics, two articles by Porges, some information on Rolfing. Really, there is almost nothing in the bibliography that is directly related to autism research, and certainly not the works you would expect to see at least listed when making grand claims about the fight or flight response (Bessel van der Kolk, for example), or theory of mind (Baron-Cohen etc.) The entire thesis posits that autism is simply a traumatic response (without ever actually calling it this). Predictably, not one work on trauma is referenced. No mention of Peter Levine, Stephen Shore, Onno van der Hart, etc. etc. etc. Bridges does not even demonstrate that she is familiar with these works, which is something that a writer should do if making these kinds of bold claims, regardless how "conversational" the tone. The book appears to be essentially a rehashing of two articles by Stephen Porges, who, inexplicably, has written an introduction to this book. Aside from completely unsubstantiated claims as to the "science" of autism (references are inserted as non sequitur quotes at the beginning of chapters with no reference to the work being cited), Bridges claims as to the autistic experience is angering and demeaning. This is an allistic individual making claims about the experience of all autistics, and let us be clear here, even actually autistic individuals would be hesitant to make a generalization with the claim that it applies to all autistics. Autism is a spectrum disorder and each individual on that spectrum has a unique set of abilities and challenges. Imagine my surprise then when I read that, as an autistic, I am unable to regulate my visceral state in the presence of others! Or that I grew up separated from my body and am a "bright person" but "imprisoned" in this useless autistic body. I have no idea where she is getting these generalizations, but if you are an allistic and you want to make claims about the autistic experience, you need to bring substantiation. It is unforgivable that someone would claim to speak for the autistic experience who is not autistic, and who cannot point to a direct testimony by an autistic person to that effect. A testimony that would be one person's experience. This is the kind of damaging work that is exploiting the autistic community and the parents of autistic children. It contributes nothing to the body of research, it contributes nothing to the actual treatment of autistics. At best, this is an ill-advised attempt to contribute to a field that Bridges cares about, and I certainly hope that is the case. At worst, works of this caliber (and they are not rare in the, as yet, ill-formed

field of research into autism), is a cynical exploitation of the vulnerable communities at stake in an effort to churn out a very poorly researched thesis to sell a book. I hope that this does not apply in this case. The oft repeated praise of the book, that it is "easy", is about the only positive that I can see to it. If you are going to make the claim to have found the one smoking gun that underpins ALL of the myriad challenges of autism, you have an ethical obligation to being evidence, to define the terms you use, to demonstrate that you know the current state of research, and to have some authentic professional claim to the expertise you assert. Make it readable, by all means, but if the quality of your argument and the paucity of your evidence of research is in this poor a state, it doesn't rise to these minimum requirements.

A very easy to understand concept that explains issues that persons with Autism can experience. I found the concept attractive, the line drawings instructive and helpful. I really appreciated the language used. The idea that youReframe Your Thinking Around Autism: How the Polyvagal Theory and Brain Plasticity Help Us Make Sense of AutismÂ can retrain the input to help our autistic people is phenomenal. Thank you Holly Bridges.

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