

Dr. John Maag by Erica Armbruster



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John Maag, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders,
University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Lincoln, Nebraska

Education

- B.A. in Special Education, Area of Emotional Disturbance, Minor: Psychology
[Arizona State University](#), 1981
- M.A. in Special Education
[Arizona State University](#), 1983
- Ph.D. in Special Education, Areas of Specialization: Emotional/Behavioral
Disorders and Counseling Psychology
[Arizona State University](#), 1988

Dr. Maag is most known for his work addressing children with emotional and behavioral disorders, specifically in an educational setting. His work as a researcher, educator, editor, keynote speaker, and consultant is well known throughout the country.

Background Information

Dr. John Maag was raised in Deerfield, Illinois, a suburb approximately 45 minutes north of Chicago. Dr. Maag says it was a small, quiet town where neighborhood children played and went to school together, although “the high school and curriculum wasn’t geared toward children outside of the ‘norm’” (J. Maag, personal communication, October, 11, 2010). Upon graduation from Deerfield High School, Dr. Maag and a couple of friends planned on living together and writing songs, trying to make a career of music. When two band mates decided to forgo music and attend college, Dr. Maag opted to attend a small school, [University of Wisconsin-Stout](#), in Menomonie, Wisconsin, for three semesters before discontinuing his studies. However, while there, he took an abnormal psychology class, loved it, and became interested in behavior. After leaving school, he began working in a factory for a year and a half, which, according to Maag, “told [him] what [he] didn’t want to do” (J. Maag, personal communication, October 11, 2010). He decided to give college another try, attending [Arizona State University](#) in Tempe, Arizona. Despite his memorable experience with abnormal psychology, he believed that he would not be able to get a job with a psychology undergraduate degree. Dr. Maag decided to pursue a degree in special education, with a minor in psychology. Through a program offered by the University, he was able to specialize his special education degree to focus on children with emotional and behavioral disorders.

After graduating, Dr. Maag began working full-time as a special education teacher, while attending Arizona State University part-time to obtain a master’s degree. He subsequently worked as a “clinical supervisor and therapist at an

adolescent psychiatric hospital” (J. Maag, personal communication, October 11, 2010) before returning to school full-time to earn his doctorate from Arizona State University. He began working with his undergraduate advisor, [Rob Rutherford](#), who became his mentor and a great influence in his studies and career path. Rutherford’s work focused primarily on children with behavioral disorders, and he was the advisor of Dr. Maag’s doctoral committee. Dr. Maag was able to work with Rutherford through his time at ASU and remained close with him until he passed away in 2007.

During his work as a doctoral student, Dr. Maag conducted research on depression in childhood, and adolescents with behavioral disorders and learning disabilities. His dissertation focused on treating childhood and adolescent depression through stress inoculation training, a cognitive behavioral intervention. He received a Doctoral Fellowship Award from the [U.S. Department of Education](#) in 1986 to pursue his dissertation and course of study. During his last year of school, he was awarded the Outstanding College of Education Graduate Student Award by the [Alumni Association](#) of Arizona State University. He was also invited to be a speaker at ASU’s 1988 commencement ceremony.

Professional Life

Upon receiving his doctoral degree, Dr. Maag taught at the [University of Maryland](#) for one year in 1988 before taking a position as an assistant professor in the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders at the [University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#) in 1989. He has been with the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln for 21 years, and was granted full professor status in 2000.

After moving to Nebraska, Dr. Maag sat for the state exam to obtain licenses to become both a mental health practitioner and a certified professional counselor. For approximately eight years, Dr. Maag had a part-time, private psychotherapy practice in addition to his duties as a university professor. However, because of the demands of teaching and conducting research, coupled with an increasing number of speaking and consultation engagements, Dr. Maag discontinued his psychotherapy practice.

Dr. Maag has published more than 100 journal articles, book chapters, and books combined. He is also a popular public speaker and has given more than 35 keynote addresses at state, regional, and national conferences.

His current research interests include training educators to use functional assessment information to develop behavior intervention plans, the cognitive behavioral treatment of childhood and adolescent depression, and teaching students self-management skills.

In the early years of his research, while still a special education teacher and master's student, Dr. Maag had an interest in treating self-stimulatory behaviors of children with autism and developmental disabilities. Additionally, he was also attracted to teaching social skills to children with emotional and behavioral disorders. His work then began to move into studying depression, as well as children and adolescents with behavioral disorders and learning disabilities. After many years of conducting research and publishing the results, Dr. Maag began to focus the content of his publications to practical applications for educators and mental health workers. It was at this time that Dr. Maag began a 10-year collaborative working relationship, with Dr. Bob Reid on topics related

to children and adolescents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The one overarching theme that has become more prominent through the years has been Dr. Maag's ability to apply his research to the educator's perspective. He has written many articles that read like "how to" guides for teachers and professionals working with the children, on which he conducts his research. Dr. Maag continues to conduct research on childhood and adolescent depression.

It is no surprise that Dr. Maag is a popular professional speaker, offering his plethora of knowledge and practical applications to other professionals by way of presentations and consulting. While Dr. Maag is most widely published because of his research, he is also known for his work as a consultant for school districts, educational agencies and State Departments of Education around the country.

Dr. Maag has taken his uncanny ability to apply his research to practical situations and authored numerous books, one of which, *Parenting without Punishment*, won a [Parents' Choice Award](#). Each of his books focuses on behavior management and the applications of its skills to educators and parents.

He is currently a consulting editor for five well-known journals: *Behavioral Disorders*, *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *Remedial and Special Education*, and *Intervention in School and Clinic*, and *Preventing School Failure*.

In his spare time, Dr. Maag enjoys many outdoor activities such as hiking, playing Frisbee and scuba diving. He also enjoys listening to and playing music, a passion he has had for much of his life. Additionally, he looks forward to spending time with his two sons, Dylan and Colton, and his wife, Dr. Sue Kemp,

who is also a professor in the [Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#) (Maag, J., personal communication, October 11, 2010).

Honors and Awards

Dr. John Maag has been honored with numerous prestigious awards. He has received a Recognition Award for Contributions to Students, from the UNL Teaching Council and Parents Association. He received this award from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln six times from 1993 to 2010. In addition, he was awarded the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Distinguished Teaching Award in 1993. He was also awarded the Professor of the Month award, in 2008, from the [Mortar Board National Honor Society](#). Finally, as mentioned previously, Dr. Maag's book, *Parenting without Punishment*, received a Parents' Choice Award from the Parenting Choice Foundation in 1996.

Most Recent Work

Articles

Maag, J. W. & Katsiyannis, A. (in press). School-based mental health services:

Funding options and issues. *Journal of Disability Policy Issues*.

Maag, J. W., & Katsiyannis, A. (in press). Early intervention programs for children with behavior problems and at-risk for developing antisocial behaviors: Evidence –and research-based practices. *Remedial and Special Education*.

- Maag, J. W. (2009). Resistance to Change: Overcoming institutional and individual limitations for improving student behavior through PLCs. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals, 4*(2), 41-57.
- Maag, J. W., & Katsiyannis, A. (2008). The medical model to block eligibility for students with EBD: A response to intervention alternative. *Behavioral Disorders, 33*, 184-194.
- Maag, J. W. (2008). Rational-emotive therapy to help teachers control their emotions and behavior when dealing with disagreeable students. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 44*, 52-57.
- Maag, J. W., & Anderson, J. M. (2007). Sound-field amplification to increase compliance to directions in students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Behavioral Disorders, 32*, 238-253.
- Maag, J. W. (2006). Social skills training for youth with emotional and behavioral disorders: A review of reviews. *Behavioral Disorders, 32*, 4-17.
- Maag, J. W., & Katsiyannis, A. (2006). Behavioral intervention plans: Legal and practical considerations for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 31*, 348-362.
- Maag, J. W., & Anderson, J. M. (2006). Effects of sound-field amplification to increase compliance of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 31*, 378-393.

Chapters

- Maag, J. W., Swearer, S. M., & Toland, M. D. (2009). Cognitive-behavioral interventions for depression in children and adolescents: Meta-analysis, promising programs, and implications for school personnel. In M. J. Mayer,

R. Van Acker, J. E. Lochman, & F. M. Gresham (Eds.), *Cognitive behavioral interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disorders* (pp. 235-265). New York: Guilford.

Maag, J. W. (2007). Childhood and adolescent depression. In C. R. Reynolds & E. Fletcher-Janzen (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of special education: A reference for the education of the handicapped and other exceptional children and adults* (3rd ed., pp. 685-690). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Maag, J. W. (2007). Management of resistant behavior. In C. R. Reynolds & E. Fletcher-Janzen (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of special education: A reference for the education of the handicapped and other exceptional children and adults* (3rd ed., pp. 1730-1734). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Maag, J. W. (2007). Behavioral theory and practice: Current and future issues. In L. Florian (Ed.), *Handbook of special education* (pp. 259-271). London: Sage.

Books/Monographs

Maag, J. W. (in press). *When discipline fails don't get angry, get peculiar: Audacious, atypical, and effective approaches for managing oppositional students*. Port Chester, NY: National Professional Resources.

Maag, J. W., & Kemp, S. E. (2004). *Peculiar tracks for derailing resistance*. Lincoln, NE: ACT Press.

Maag, J. W. (2004). *Behavior management: From theoretical implications to practical applications* (2nd Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Maag, J. W. (2001). *Powerful struggles: Managing resistance, building rapport*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Maag, J. W. (1999). *Behavior management: From theoretical implications to practical*

applications. San Diego, CA: Singular.

Maag, J. W. (1998). *Teaching children self-control: Applications of perceptual control theory*. In L. Bullock & R. Gable (Series Eds.), Second CCBD mini-library series: Successful interventions for the 21st century (pp. 1-42). Reston, VA: Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders.

Maag, J. W. (1996). *Parenting without punishment: Making problem behavior work for you*. Philadelphia, PA: Charles Press.

Rutherford, R. B., Jr., & Maag, J. W. (Eds.). (1988). *Severe behavior disorders of children and youth* (Vol. 11). Reston, VA: Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders.

Braaten, S., Rutherford, R. B., Jr., & Maag, J. W. (Eds.). (1987). *Programming for adolescents with behavioral disorders* (Vol. 3). Reston, VA: Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders.

Children's Books

Maag, J. W., & Jackson, M. C. (2010). *Codey's monsters*. Baltimore, MD: PublishAmerica.

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