
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Denning, P. (2000). *Practicing harm reduction psychotherapy: An alternative approach to addictions*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Reviewed by: Mike Beauchesne, University of Ottawa

Practicing Harm Reduction Psychotherapy: An Alternative Approach to Addictions introduces the reader to a new and innovative way to view addictions and provides a nontraditional approach to the treatment of individuals with substance abuse difficulties. The author utilizes her extensive experience in the fields of mental health and substance abuse to inform this theoretical orientation, impart practical knowledge and skills, and cause the reader to reexamine his/her beliefs concerning addictions.

Part I of *Practicing Harm Reduction Psychotherapy* is dedicated to defining the concept of harm reduction and exploring its basic tenets and rationale. An overview of the prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse and its relationship to psychological and emotional difficulties is also presented. Finally, the Disease and Adaptive models of addiction are discussed and the development of Harm Reduction Psychotherapy is outlined. It is argued that the traditional Disease model approach to addictions is excessively rigid (e.g., abstinence as the sole criterion of success) and has been generally ineffective in the treatment of individuals with substance abuse issues. Harm Reduction Psychotherapy is presented as a more pragmatic, flexible, and effective alternative.

In the book's second section, the author highlights the importance of incorporating a thorough assessment as a phase of treatment and describes the 12 components of her Multidisciplinary Assessment Profile (MAP). Foundations and essential components of treatment are then delineated. Topics discussed include the building of rapport, trust, attachment, treatment matching, and the impact of culture. Although somewhat basic to practicing counsellors, these discussion points provide a worthwhile review. This section concludes with useful case examples illustrating the harm reduction approach and a discussion of comorbidity.

The final section of the book details the many ways in which harm reduction can be applied. Denning convincingly argues that this model is not limited to psychotherapy, but is applicable to clinical consultation, staff training, and organizational development. Finally, difficulties with standard psychotherapeutic techniques and challenges posed by combining interventions from different theoretical orientations are considered.

Harm Reduction Psychotherapy is a burgeoning perspective that takes an impressively holistic client-centred approach. The author has succeeded in creating a book both new and experienced counsellors can derive benefit from as the theoretical and practical information provided is delivered in concrete terms, void of unnecessary jargon, and is grounded in robust research. The use of clinical case examples and step-by-step guidelines for assessment and treatment makes it a must read for

all mental health and substance abuse practitioners. Moreover, the book's extensive appendices make it a handy source of reference and an invaluable addition to one's personal library.

Neuharth, D. (1998) *If You Had Controlling Parents* (1st Ed). New York, NY: Harper-Collins Publishers.

Reviewed by: Olivia M. Quentin, Acadia University

We all have parents. They, or our immediate caregivers, extended a certain degree of control over us. However, individuals who were subjected to an unhealthily high degree of control may be at risk for distorted self-images, depression, addictions, eating disorders, or the inability to sustain an intimate relationship.

Dan Neuharth works as a family therapist in San Francisco. The analysis of the problems and his recommendations for resolving them are based on assumptions of psychodynamic/ object relations, family systems, and cognitive-behavioural theories. Having grown up in a controlling family he wanted to create a book that assists in making peace with the past and resolving anything unfinished with parents.

The book skillfully blends a variety of self-tests and exercises, a discussion of a range of issues, and extensive interviews with forty individuals who were affected by controlling parents. The book, however, does lack an index. The book is divided into three parts. Part 1, entitled "Naming the Problem," describes eight styles of controlling parents; in Part 2, "Understanding the Problem" the author provides a clear sense of why and how parents may have acted as they did and addresses the possible effects on individuals; and finally, Part 3 discusses "Solving the Problem" and offers "paths to healing".

The introduction contains assessment charts to help readers decide whether this book will be useful. Neuharth presents questions such as: "Growing up, did you often feel. . . Forbidden to question or disagree with a parent? Pressured by excessive expectations? Criticized more than you were encouraged?"

Neuharth's "Dirty Dozen" in the second part contains explanations which illustrate the process of contracting harmful habits. The well-laid out table in this chapter describes methods of control, gives examples of those methods, and shows "Potential Consequences." For example the method "Social Control" means "Interfering in choices of friends and dates" and "Discouraging contact with non-family members" which potentially results in "Slowed individuation" and "Distrust, gullibility or distorted ideas about relationships and other people . . ."

The next step in the book leads to "healing" which is a crucial initial requirement for "Emotionally Leaving Home," a process Neuharth also calls "Individuation." I would have liked Neuharth to elaborate on this matter.

Many clients come into therapy looking for answers and solutions, for 'a' truth. By pointing out contradictory statements that are equally true, *If You Had Controlling Parents* helps the reader to realize and to accept that there is not always a single truth and that several answers or solutions can be found.