
Fincham, Frank D., Ferandes, Leyan O. L. & Humphreys, Keith. (1993). *Communicating in Relationships: A Guide for Couples and Professionals*. Champaign, IL: Research Press. 280 pp., \$25.95 US.

Reviewed by: Dennis Brown, Ph.D., Chartered Psychologist.

The authors promote this book as a tour guide to improving dyadic relationships of all kinds, whether they be parent-child, adult-adult, female-male, straight or gay. Although other groups will find it useful, the book will particularly appeal to motivated, heterosexual couples wanting to enhance their communication skills, or to beginning and intermediate therapists wanting to clarify and consolidate their thoughts about communication and relationships.

The authors preface their book by stating that their ideas are based on state-of-the-art knowledge from research and clinical practice. However, it would be more accurate to state, as they do later, that their perspective is based mainly on behavioural and cognitive-behavioural research and clinical practice. As such, I found it a very practical book, but a basic recipes cookbook rather than an advanced or gourmet cookbook.

After a well-thought-out introductory chapter that identifies who the book is intended for and why it might be helpful to them, the authors use a combination of readings, questionnaires, and exercises to provide hands-on-learning for couples wanting to improve their communication and relationship skills. The authors systematically teach these skills, chapter by chapter, starting with learning how to form realistic expectations and to set the stage for an effective discussion. They then go on to deal with issues such as taking responsibility for oneself and to teach basic skills such as attending to and communicating feelings, or giving behavioural feedback. Later, they deal with knowing when and how to problem-solve and how to maintain and evaluate one's progress. Lastly, they use special chapters to help couples address topical relationship issues such as dual-career couples, sexuality, spirituality, gender and cultural differences, and separation and divorce.

I can't say I found anything particularly new in this book, but I did like how it was presented. The book is written in an easy-to-understand, jargon-free style. It provides beginners with both a clear enough overview of the field and enough attention to details to allow them to obtain an adequate grasp of the subject matter.

The authors' step-by-step approach should easily enable motivated couples to learn the fundamentals of effective communication. Beginning counsellors can learn an easy-to-explain, structured framework they can then use to help their clients analyze and improve communication.

In addition to being able to use the structured exercises with their clients, professionals will also find a helpful summary in the appendix which provides an excellent overview of the research that underpins the authors' perspective. Professionals will appreciate the solid research supporting this book. Both references and an annotated bibliography for couples are also provided.