

of an illness, and encouraged to learn coping skills and stress management techniques.

A particularly innovative approach to assist the practitioner in recommending family treatment is offered in section seven. The Family Therapy Decision Tree is described as a sequential four-step evaluation process. Indications and contradictions for family therapy as well as criteria for recommending individual versus family treatment, marital treatment versus sex therapy are provided. Students are also sensitized to such cultural, ethnic, religious and economic issues that must be carefully considered in pursuing a particular course of treatment.

In chapter nine, a review of the research literature alerts the student to the importance of considering the data supporting the use of particular forms of family therapy before actually using them. This discussion also reminds the student of the basic criteria to be satisfied in designing a study on the effectiveness of family therapy.

Finally, practical and ethical considerations in the application of family therapy are addressed in section ten.

The authors point out often in their text, an appreciation of family life-cycle variables should guide the practitioner to areas of intervention. In much the same way, an appreciation of the kind of information needed to shift the family therapist to the next stage of professional development should include a reread of this text.

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O'Hanlon, W., & Wilk, J. (1987). *Shifting contexts: the generation of effective psychotherapy*. New York and London: Guilford, 1987. 298 pp.

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I especially recommend this book to two groups of readers. One is the group of psychotherapists drawn toward the thinking spearheaded by Gregory Bateson and Milton Erickson. Although this body of literature already has spawned a number of psychotherapies, O'Hanlon and Wilk have done a commendable job of framing an organized, workable psychotherapeutic approach that is faithful to the Bateson-Erickson foundation, melds the authors' own clinical acumen, and sparkles with the refreshing, no-nonsense maximizing of what can be accomplished in each and every session. It is for individual adult therapists, couples and family therapists, and therapists in the tradition of neurolinguistic programming, cybernetics, strategic and systemic therapies.

I also recommend this book for psychotherapists whose sense of humour allows them to appreciate a book that is unsparing in its refusal to accept virtually anything that is held dear by most psychotherapies. Whether you do or do not accept the way O'Hanlon and Wilk invite you to do therapy, you will be challenged by their unconditional puncturing of just about every cherished truth, accepted axiom, precious presumption, saluted Shibboleth, foundational cornerstone, and pillar of practice that most psychotherapists believe in. You will be secretly cheering on their roguish deflatings—until you find your own approach

equally dismissed and punctured. This book is entertaining, challenging, and mischievous for those with a sound sense of humour.

The nine chapters start with the client's presenting problem or complaint, and end with the closing work of the session, with generous excerpts of dialogue and plenty of excursions into theoretical rationale.

Based on the ground-breaking work of Bateson and Erickson, complemented by that of Rabkin, Dell, Keeney, and others, the refreshingly radical reformulation opens with what is generally accepted as the presenting problem or complaint. The authors contend that therapists' systems of ingrained beliefs, assumptions, presuppositions, and axioms are powerful determinants of both the content of what is accepted as the working problems and complaints, and what, therefore, is to be done with them.

Virtually all traditional approaches are therefore culpable, and all are dismissed at the outset, together with their theories of problems, difficulties, psychopathology, determinants and pre-determinants, contributing causes and personality structures. Instead, the authors' opening task is to work with the client in recasting the "problem" and "presenting complaint" into simple factual descriptions of observable and verifiable events. The surprising consequences bear little or no resemblance to what is ordinarily treated as problems and presenting complaints regardless of approach. Instead, the distilled working target is (a) something the person does that the person does not want to do; (b) something the person does not do that the person wants to do; or (c) something the person does in one way, and wants to do in a different way.

The criterion and aim of their therapy is that the client used to act in one way and now can act in another way. It is simply a matter of doing something different or differently. Accordingly, virtually all of the theories of personality and psychotherapy, constructs and principles, processes and programs, together with the underlying conceptual systems of essentially all approaches, are dismissed as irrelevant baggage.

What is left are methods directly flowing out of the principle that the only way to behave differently is to behave differently. These methods are presented in the final four chapters. They are based upon the work of Bateson, Erickson, and others in that robust family of therapists but, more importantly, the methods are directly connected to and aimed at the radically reformulated presenting problem or complaint.

Aside from the rebuttals and objections from my own experiential approach, I have four overall reviewer's comments: (a) The reader should expect to have some difficulty with the many technical terms; a glossary would have helped. (b) The authors might have presented their theoretical framework in a single concise chapter rather than spreading it throughout the chapters and one of the appendices. (c) Other readers might well share my hope for a sample transcript to illustrate how the therapy actually transpires. (d) The actual methods that are presented are of lesser stature and attractiveness—as the authors themselves say—than the overall conceptual framework, the compelling and useful ways of dismantling and reformulating the presenting problem or complaint, the practical emphasis on galvanizing ways of doing something different or differently, and the wholesale dismissal of the excess baggage of most therapeutic approaches.