

tion is the belief that the husband has a right to full-time employment while the wife has a right to full-time employment only if the husband consents.

The authors note their decision not to seek assistance from a publishing company in the writing of this book, a decision which, in retrospect, was viewed with some regret. In regard to this issue, restatement of phrases and entire sections is frequently used to highlight important points. For example, in the section on strategies for developing a positive self-concept, the phrase "picture yourself positive" appears at the end of each of the ten strategies. Due to space limitations, an alternative method of establishing emphasis may have been more economical and may also have been less tedious to read.

In summary, *That's Living* provides general, easy-to-comprehend information on a variety of medical, psychiatric and psychological topics. The topics vary in seriousness, complexity and interest to individual readers. The discussion on alzheimer's disease, in particular, may be of interest to a more select group of readers. This discussion is enhanced by the introduction of conversations which highlight behaviours typical of alzheimer's patients. With respect to content, the discussions are generally limited in scope and the more knowledgeable reader is urged to seek additional sources. Depending on the specific subject area, the bibliography may be of some assistance in this regard.

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Mahrer, A. (1989), *How to do experiential psychotherapy*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

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*Reviewed by:* William J. Hague, University of Alberta

I want to review this book for what it appears to be, and for what it promises and then for what it actually gives. I want to review it from the point of view of the range of potential readers. To set this range, imagine, if you will, two prospective readers, one a beginning psychology student, the other an experienced therapist.

What it appears to be is a "how to" manual for potential practitioners of experiential psychotherapy. It promises to tell how to do this therapy, but does not tell why. It does not explain the psychological and philosophical foundations of the therapy or which clients would benefit from it or which may be harmed by it. The book does not promise any ethical guidelines for the use of this therapy, nor any encouragement for the potential practitioner to take over-all responsibility for his or her client. It promises, while claiming to be "complete of itself," only to tell the reader how to *do* experiential psychotherapy "and requires no special background or training in experiential psychotherapy." This is a narrow promise.

Potential readers, including naïve, beginning counsellors with little philosophy and still less experience, shopping for a therapy, will read these promises on the back cover: ". . . an intensive and powerful approach that offers the patient an opportunity to undergo deep-seated personality and

behavior changes *in each session.*" (Italics mine.) "Because each session proceeds through the same four steps, this therapy is appropriate for patients seen in a single session, in short-term or in long-term therapy. It is appropriate for *any patient who is ready and willing* to carry out the four steps." (Again, italics mine.) I can see two reactions to these promises. Beginner: "Wow, this book will set me up as a therapist, I'll buy it." Experienced practitioners: "These are wild, unreal and dangerous claims for any therapy—four steps *all the time?* *Any patient ready and willing...*?"

The next paragraph of the cover squib directly addresses my two imagined readers, promising to satisfy the needs of both of them since this therapy is "Designed for use by either beginning or experienced therapists." A sentence like this can only lure the beginner and make wary the experienced.

The last promise on the back cover is that this book will "enable the practitioner to carry out the therapy effectively and completely, *obtaining optimum results in each session.*" (Italics mine.) The most merciful conclusion one can come to after reading these exorbitant promises is that they were written by an over-zealous editor, and not approved by an author with many years of publication and clinical practice behind him.

So we must go to the substance of the text to see surely what the author says. Regrettably, the book itself does nothing to allay one's apprehensions. In fact it repeats the claims and adds to them. The substance is, as promised, a how-to manual, which only briefly, by way of introduction, explores the roots of experiential psychotherapy in the T-groups and sensitivity work of the sixties. Finally, after eschewing membership in many other theories including psychoanalysis, it lays claim to being existential-humanistic psychology. However, the author's emphasis throughout on immediate problem resolution, frequently by recapitulating emotional experiences of the past, puts his theory (only implicit in the techniques he recommends) in the camp of the kind of eclecticism we saw in the sixties.

Obviously the author did not, in constructing this book, think it necessary to outline the philosophical tenets of experiential therapy, referring the reader instead to a recent (1989) revision of one of his many works on the subject. One can wonder if beginning therapists are going to bother with this reference when they have already been told they can start right in with clients. The introduction promises therapist's patients "profound personality and behavior change *in each session,*" and that the therapy is "appropriate for virtually any adult" and is designed for "maximum depth and breadth of therapeutic change . . ." Change is promised, but the direction of that change is only obliquely indicated in this manual by its constant encouragement of greater intensity of feeling for its own sake. This is Mahrer's goal which he clearly explicates in other publications. The point needs to be more explicit even in a how-to manual. One wonders too at the alignment of a statement, (p. 54) ". . . many therapies consider the sheer strength of feeling or experiencing as itself valuable. We do not." It seems to be in contrast with a statement in his 1978 book, *Experiencing*, "Intense experiencing is its own end, the meaning of living and being, the intrinsic quality of human being. There is no further meaning, purpose or goal (p. 592).

Another implicit but powerful theme runs through the manual. Transcripts of actual cases typically involve female clients and frequently hit upon themes of a disturbing combination of sexuality and power which the patient, in keeping with the simple system of this therapy, is invited to experience more and more intensely. One wonders in a world where the combination of sexuality and power is at least game playing and sometimes even a deadly combination, if one should, without question, methodically encourage intensification.

One case is worth following as an illustration: Therapy is illustrated by a scene of the patient going back into childhood where she is a little girl playing "horsey" with Dad, sitting on his back as he crawls hands and knees on the floor. She is encouraged to "be" the "experience of sexualized strength and power, living the sense of sexualized control and domination over him." She becomes more aware of the sexual feelings in her genitals, as she commands him to do this and that, as she sensuously slithers on his back "in thorough controlling domination of his movements." (p. 68)

On page 73, the patient is encouraged to "behave in any way whatsoever that comes from and provides for the wonderful new experiencing." On page 75, "The therapist becomes the new experiencing, quite ready and willing to behave in all sorts of ways that flow out of this experiencing. On page 87, under the title, "Rehearsal for reality" the therapist is exhorted to "try it out by giving it a complete dress rehearsal as if she were actually doing it. Then both she and the therapist can pay attention to their bodies and see whether the bodily feelings are good and pleasant or bad and unpleasant." (Are we really back to "If it feels good, do it"?) The only consideration which may be called "ethical" is on p. 77 where the patient is to be invited to play the "horsey" game with the "right" partner—whatever "right" means. At one theoretical level the reader can wonder why this sexuality and return to childhood fantasies seem so important to an author who has in the introduction eschewed any psychoanalytic orientations; at another, practical, level one wonders if our imaginary beginning counsellor thumbing through the book will not find this both fascinating and permissive. One wonders (only very briefly) if "all" patients are appropriate subjects for intense emotional arousal. Most experienced counsellors could pick out from their clients a handful of human beings who clearly are not ready, would not be helped and may indeed be seriously hurt.

At the conclusion of this manual, Alvin Mahrer, to his credit, invites suggestions of how this publication might be improved. I do not see the points I have hit upon here as being for the most part things that can be "improved" upon by touching up this manuscript. They are fundamental questions of academic integrity, of being realistic about the expectations of a therapeutic approach, of being clear and explicit about one's philosophical and theoretical foundations, and making these evident to all readers in the broad range of audience which the author seeks to encourage to use his psychotherapy.

On page one, ". . . beginning and advanced therapists regardless of professional affiliation or therapeutic approach" are told that they will find this manual "cordial" if they will only "bracket" some ideas. Obviously, I did

not find it cordial, perhaps because I failed the invitation to "bracket" some ideas temporarily. Some basics could not even temporarily be pushed out of the way. This book, most often only implicitly, touches on too many basic principles to allow one to bracket them and forge ahead with the practice of Experiential Psychotherapy.

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Nichols, W. C. (1988). *Marital Therapy: An Integrative Approach*. Guilford Press: New York.

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A major assumption underlying Nichols' approach to family therapy is that inevitably family therapy becomes marital therapy. Marriage is seen as a distinctive and unique social relationship defined by its voluntary nature, object-relations factors, fusion of family systems, and marital life cycle.

In constructing his integrative approach, Dr. Nichols draws on systems theory, object relations theory, and social learning theory. Although these positions are described adequately in chapter three, the section on objects relations seems almost too detailed to avoid being perceived as favoured. In a later discussion of the treatment process, Nichols emphasized the importance of altering the object relations attachments between the spouses in order to uncover the projective identification and collusion before productive problem solving can occur.

In chapter four, indications for the use of marital therapy are provided. Two major contradictions are identified, viz. paranoia and extreme hostility in one of the spouses, or lack of familiarity with or commitment to marital therapy on the part of the therapist.

Section two deals with the treatment process, beginning with the first telephone contact. Assessment of the marital situation is recommended before therapy commences, and a balance between therapist observations and self-reports is encouraged. Three stages of therapy are presented: early stage, middle stage, and termination. During the early stage the focus is on motivation and commitment and the beginning therapeutic alliance. The bulk of the therapeutic work is carried out in the middle stage. It is not surprising then to find that this section is most detailed, coming alive with actual case excerpts. The therapist typically works through dependency issues and object relations issues at this stage in the treatment process. The author recommends focusing on communication issues to begin with as this is an area most couples in therapy recognize as a problem area. The termination stage is rather abruptly dealt with in three paragraphs, and leaves the reader feeling short-changed, knowing that there is much more wisdom that Dr. Nichols has to offer.

In the section on special issues, the meaning of extra-marital affairs is explored, violence and alcoholism in marriage are examined, and the