

## BOOK REVIEWS/REVUE DE LIVRES

Ellis, A. and Harper, R. H. *A New Guide to Rational Living*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975. 233 pages. \$7.95

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*A Guide to Rational Living* was originally published in 1961 in an effort to introduce the layman to the tenets of rational-emotive therapy (RET). *The Guide*, as it soon came to be called, outlines the merits and limitations of "self-therapy", then goes on to suggest how each of us might benefit from a rigorous application of RET principles to our own lives. The ten "irrational ideas" basic to RET are thoroughly discussed and clearly illustrated with case history material.

*A New Guide to Rational Living* preserves the content described above and adds three major revisions. First, *The New Guide* acknowledges RET's debt to general semantics, especially the ideas advanced by Alfred Korzybski. In the introduction, Ellis and Harper state: "RET does take over where Korzybski left off . . ." (p. xi). Following Korzybski's suggestions, this revised edition is written in E-prime, a style of expression which omits virtually all forms of the verb "to be". The purpose of E-prime is to decrease the "isness" of identity that the English language usually portrays. For example, say a client feels depressed and expresses his feelings by saying "I am worthless". From a semantic perspective, the statement "I am worthless" implies a number of connections that are purely a product of linguistic structure. The implications include: (1) that worthlessness is an intrinsic essence of the person; (2) that he was always worthless; (3) that he always will be worthless; (4) that if he were not worthless, he would not be himself; and (5) that the worthlessness pervades his total person. The use of E-prime avoids these difficulties and, according to the authors, results in a number of advantages, including the following: (1) It eliminates certain unanswerable questions such as "Who am I?". (2) It helps people become more aware of how we can imprison ourselves with language.

(3) It decreases the implication of finality inherent in "is" statements; for example, the statement "I am honest." implies honesty at all times in all situations now and forever more. (4) It avoids labeling and self-fulfilling prophecies. The overall impact of E-prime is to give *The New Guide* a more tentative sounding, less dogmatic flavor than the original.

A second important revision, related to the first, is the elimination of the "musterbation" that peppers the first edition. The revised edition contains few "shoulds", "oughts", and "musts".

The third major revision is the inclusion of an extra chapter which discusses additions to, and refinements of, RET; for example: the use of homework assignments; a clearer distinction between appropriate and inappropriate emotions from an RET perspective; the use of positive and negative imagery; the place of self-reinforcement in RET; and questions to ask oneself when disputing irrational ideas.

These revisions make for a stronger, more readable book than *The Guide*; however, the original contains two other shortcomings that remain in the revised edition.

*The New Guide* lacks a clear statement of the meaning of "rational" in "rational-emotive". The word "logical" is used throughout as a synonym, but "rational" does not mean "logical" in the Aristotelian sense. Consider the following syllogism:

All people who lie are sinful.  
I lie.  
Therefore, I am sinful.

This is a valid argument according to the rules of Aristotelian logic because the latter is concerned with form, not content. Logic, as a branch of mathematics, reasons that *IF* the major and minor premises of the above argument are true, then the conclusion is true. It does not address itself to the truth or falsity of the premises. And that is exactly the role of RET: it questions premises and challenges the client to provide empirical evidence of their validity.

A second weakness is the question-answer format used in part of the book. I find it

artificial and gimmicky — a technique employed to conquer straw men.

In the past, I have assigned *The Guide* as background reading for some of my clients and

found that people who read it seemed to progress more quickly. I now have no further use for *The Guide* because in the future I'll be assigning *A New Guide to Rational Living*.

*Discussing Death: A Guide to Death Education*  
By Gretchen C. Mills, Raymond Reisler, Jr.,

Alice E. Robinson and Gretchen Vermilye.  
Homewood, Illinois: ETC Publications, 1976,  
140 pp. \$8.50 (cloth), \$5.50 (paper).

*A Teaching Unit on Death and Dying*

By The Memorial Society of Edmonton and  
District, 5326 Ada Blvd., Edmonton, Alberta,  
T5W 4N7, 1975, 103 pp.

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Many writers have pointed to the widespread denial of death in North American society. Although death is inextricably bound up with life, the phenomenon of death has become a taboo topic — a fact which children learn at an early age when their natural curiosity leads them to ask questions about death and dying. Parents who learned in their early years that they should avoid talking and thinking about death can hardly be expected to help their own children develop a wholesome and freeing attitude toward the subject.

Two recently published volumes on death education provide concrete and helpful approaches to the task of reducing the effects of the death taboo. *Discussing Death* contains a wealth of resources, activity ideas, and information that can be used by teachers in all disciplines to integrate activities and discussions about death into ongoing classes. Although this death education guide can be most directly applied to classroom situations, it can also be an invaluable reference, curriculum guide and catalyst for any

*Consultation: A Book of Readings.*

Dinkmeyer, D. and Carlson, J. (Eds.) New  
York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1975, 295  
Pages + xvii

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According to the editors, *Consultation: A Book of Readings* represents an attempt to provide for

adult interacting with children in the school, home, or church. The guide is separated into four age levels: 5-6 years, 7-9 years, 10-12 years, and 13-18 years, and the curriculum concepts and learning opportunities are presented sequentially from the basic to the more difficult. Among the concepts dealt with in the guide are: awareness of feelings, life cycles, grief expression, and death causes.

*A Teaching Unit on Death and Dying* is designed for use with senior high school and junior college students. The purpose of the unit is to stimulate thought and dialogue among high school and beginning college students on the topic of death, and to provide a variety of information and activities to help teachers and students to cope personally with the inevitability of their own death and the death of others.

Among the topics included in *A Teaching Unit on Death and Dying* are: how the dying person copes with death, the grief cycle and the bereaved, suicide, and funerals. Along with an excellent bibliography are provided a thought-provoking Attitudes Questionnaire and a Stress Scale.

Classroom teachers and educators who wish to provide creative opportunities for students to grapple with a subject as crucial as life itself will find excellent resources and guidance in these two volumes.

The subject of death deserves our most serious attention and innovative educational approaches, for, in the words of Paul Tillich's famous question, "if one is not able to die, is he really able to live?"

counsellors and others in the helping professions the exposure to consultation theory and procedures that training programs have not, at least until recently, provided in any significant way. The book is designed for use in basic courses in pupil personnel work taken by counsellors, psychologists, social workers, and administrators.

The readings in the book are distributed across six interrelated sections that are designated as follows: "Rationale and Theory of Consultation",