

Helping Parents Help Their Children, L. Eugene Arnold (Editor), New York, N.Y.: Brunner/Mazel, 1978, 420 pp., \$17.50.

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This book is premised on the assumption that parents exert a greater influence on their children than do professional helpers. Professionals are advised to direct more of their efforts toward parents resulting in more favorable outcomes for the child.

Arnold defines parental guidance "as the offering to parents of information, clarification, advice, support, counsel, directives, supportive psychotherapy or other interaction with a professional helper, with the intention of indirectly helping the child." What follows are 32 chapters which suggest the content of parental guidance, the groups who would profit from it, and how to do it. All but one of the chapters appear to have been written expressly for this book. Several of the contributors, among whom are Albert Ellis, William Glasser, Murial James and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, are well known to counsellors.

This volume may be typified as a practical handbook. A wide range of information about childhood, from colic to adolescent depression, is presented. As well, an introduction to a variety of strategies involving parents, from the teacher-parent conference to the parents as primary therapists, is provided. In addition to its usefulness as a text for beginners in this field, this book will serve as a reference text. The editor has provided a useful cross-referencing procedure (contained as part of the textual presentation) to *common themes throughout the book*.

A series of chapters have been grouped under the rubric of conceptual options in parental guidance. Actually, these chapters represent

applications of specific theories to parental guidance; e.g. behavior modification, rational-emotive therapy, transactional analysis and filial therapy. There is little conceptual presentation or empirical evidence in this text. As a result, while some suggestions for parental guidance appeal to me as a parent and some as a counsellor (while others do neither), the criteria for distinguishing between them have to be found elsewhere.

Arnold established a therapeutic theme for this book by stating, "An effective parent is a child's most important 'therapist'." The focus of the interventions are directed toward children who are experiencing difficulties in their own lives, or whose parents are experiencing difficulties which may, in turn, affect the children. The reader is apprised of such topics as abusing parents, teenage mothers, psychotic and neurotic children and handicapped children.

A major weakness of this book is the unevenness of the presentations, both in depth and level of sophistication. This reviewer, for example, is unsure as to who would profit from an 18-line discussion of suicide and depression in adolescents. In the very next chapter, however, the teacher is advised in detailed fashion about parent-teacher conference, including recommendations about the time parameters of these conferences. There are other inconsistencies as well, which leads the reader to pick and choose among the various alternatives. For example, one chapter denounces advising parents to use corporal punishment, whereas another chapter recommends its judicious use.

The need for a practical book which deals with how parents may intervene in the remediation of their children's difficulties is addressed by this publication. What is not addressed here are parental intervention procedures which are developmental rather than remedial in nature. A book whose thrust would be to involve parents and teachers in the developmental growth of children would be of more use to counsellors at this time.