

Book Review / Compte rendu

Meier, A., & Rovers, M. (Eds.). (2010). *The Helping Relationship: Healing and Change in Community Context*. [La relation d'aide : la guérison et le changement en contexte communautaire.] Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press. ISBN 978-0-7766-0730-6, 256 pages

Reviewed by: Audrey Kinzel

ABSTRACT

The Helping Relationship presents a variety of topics carefully chosen to give the reader compelling material related to helping clients. The authors represent a range of professions including psychology, psychiatry, and pastoral counselling. Together they offer insights based on original research, clinical experience, and personal theory. Topics key to psychotherapy include transference and countertransference, supervision, and mentoring. The current trend toward manualized therapy and empirically supported treatments are discussed in the context of the helping relationship. Overall, *The Helping Relationship* provides a range of material related to the reason for the helping relationship: that is, to help the client.

RÉSUMÉ

The Helping Relationship [La relation d'aide] présente une gamme de sujets soigneusement choisis pour offrir au lecteur un matériel intéressant portant sur l'aide aux clients. Les auteurs sont issus de divers domaines professionnels, dont la psychologie, la psychiatrie, et le counseling pastoral. Ainsi réunis, ils proposent des pistes fondées sur la recherche originale, l'expérience clinique, et la théorie personnelle. Parmi les sujets-clés en psychothérapie, citons le transfert et le contre-transfert, la supervision, et le mentorat. On y discute de la tendance actuelle vers la thérapie manualisée et les traitements à fondement empirique dans le contexte de la relation d'aide. Dans l'ensemble, *The Helping Relationship* propose un éventail de matériel portant sur la justification de la relation d'aide, à savoir aider le client.

The general purpose of *The Helping Relationship* is to provide the reader with thoughtful material about the roles of the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic techniques along with other topics central to the therapeutic relationship. The book is composed of 10 chapters, each of which presents a topic about the therapeutic relationship.

The editors are Augustine Meier, PhD, psychologist in private practice and professor emeritus (Faculty of Human Sciences, Saint Paul University, Ottawa) and Martin Rovers, PhD, professor (Faculty of Human Sciences, Saint Paul University, Ottawa). Meier wrote two chapters and contributed to a third with Micheline Boivin, MA, a psychologist working with traumatized children and their parents in Gatineau, Quebec, and Molisa Meier, a PhD candidate in the clinical psychology program at the University of Ottawa. Other authors are Shelley Briscoe-Dimock, a certified counsellor and PhD candidate (Saint Paul University, Ottawa); Rever-

end Marsha Cutting, PhD, professor in pastoral care and counselling (Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Waterloo, Ontario); John Dimock, MB CH B. Dip. Psycho., FRCPC, a psychiatrist in private practice and the Canadian Armed Forces; Kristine Lund, PhD, a professor in contextual theology and pastoral counselling at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary; Brad Morrison, D.Min., a minister ordained with the United Church of Canada and a member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy; Tricia Schottler, PhD, a psychologist in Ottawa; and Lorraine Ste-Marie, D.Min., a professor in the Faculty of Human Sciences at Saint Paul University.

The book begins with a description of the nature of helping others, whether informally—whereby neighbours rally together to help a community member—or more formally through psychotherapy. The context of helping relationships is presented with a historical overview of how helping others has changed over time, leading to the present mental health movement. This overview emphasizes how the helping relationship has also evolved.

Chapter 1, *The Therapeutic Relationship and Techniques: How Clients Bring about Desired Changes*, is written by Augustine Meier. The chapter presents both sides of an active and current debate: whether it is the therapeutic relationship including therapist and client qualities that is the force facilitating change or if it is the techniques used that result in change. Meier also discusses the interaction of relationship and technique that facilitates change. The chapter concludes with clinical vignettes to illustrate the interaction of technique and relationship.

In Chapter 2, *The Fate of the Helping Relationship in the Age of Manualized Treatments: Evidence-Based Practice and Time-Limited Psychotherapies*, Tricia Schottler discusses the core aspects of the helping relationship, the bond between client and therapist, and the working alliance. She then presents three trends that are unfolding despite the body of evidence that supports the importance of the therapeutic relationship. The trends are continued adherence to the medical model, development of manualized treatment, and emphasis on empirically supported psychotherapies. She concludes with a discussion of the negative impact on the value placed on the relationship given the trends and offers suggestions to preserve the relationship.

In Chapter 3, *Transference and Countertransference Revisited*, Augustine Meier provides an overview of transference and countertransference concepts while arguing that both are natural and helpful components of all relationships, including therapeutic relationships. As natural and significant aspects of relationships, neither are to be avoided nor feared but used with intention to enhance the relationship. In Chapter 4, *Working with Transference and Countertransference in Psychotherapy*, Shelley Briscoe-Dimock continues the discussion on transference and countertransference by presenting her experience as a clinician in learning to work with these components in therapy. A case study on a client working through her transference is the focus of Chapter 5, *Working Through the Transference of an Unresolved Separation/Individuation Pattern: A Case Study Using Thematic Analysis*, by Augustine Meier, Micheline Boivin, and Molisa Meier. The authors

analyzed the transcripts of a client using “theme analysis,” a research method developed by Augustine Meier and Boivin. Theme analysis uses quantitative and qualitative components to identify how the themes evolved through the sessions. Eight themes were identified and studied for “self in relation to mother” and “self in relation to therapist.”

Chapter 6, *The Medical Model of Psychotherapy: In Historical Perspective* by John Dimock, presents a perspective of psychotherapy few counselling or psychology programs present: a view of psychotherapy from the perspective of psychiatrists and physicians. These are the professionals to whom patients turn for help, often because such services are covered by the universal health plan. Such appointments are usually limited to 15 minutes. Dimock highlights the negative impact that current trends such as manualized treatments or the desire for inexpensive and quick treatment, perhaps one session, have had on the image of psychotherapy. Historically, time and effort together with a skilled therapist were considered to be required to effect lasting change.

In Chapter 7, *The Helping Relationship: A Context for Learning*, Kristine Lund presents the idea that counselling and therapy are a learning process and not simply a focus on solving problems or eliminating dysfunction. Further, if one views therapy as learning, then therapy is not about finding the one solution but about expanding the possibilities and creating the conditions to allow these possibilities to unfold.

Chapter 8, *Mentoring: Educating for Mental Growth* by Lorraine Ste-Marie, offers the reader a discussion on three approaches—theological, philosophical, and androgogical—to understanding mentoring. The focused-conversation method is presented as a tool that aims to engage the whole person to help the mentee explore their meaning system, as this is the lens through which they act and experience their clients.

The final two chapters, Chapter 9, *The Helping Relationship in CPE Supervision* by Marsha Cutting, and Chapter 10, *The Pastorate as Helping Relationship* by Bradley T. Morrison, take the reader into the realm of pastoral counselling and the helping relationship, though the results are likely applicable to all therapy supervisory settings. Cutting writes about a study inquiring into the personal and interpersonal qualities, supervisory skills, and supervisory experience of clinical pastoral education (CPE) supervisors from the perspective of supervisees who have had a notable positive or negative clinical pastoral education supervisory experience and who have had such supervision for between six months and three years. Results indicate the quality of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee, as in the therapist-client relationship, has the power to help or hurt.

In the final chapter, Morrison argues that the pastorate is a helping relationship in that the pastoral paradigm has similarities to the common factors identified in psychotherapy. He further argues that the trend to replace pastoral counselling with spiritual counselling is misguided because the latter has more of an individual focus whereas the former has an innate focus on the congregation as a worshipping community because of beliefs relating to and about God. He argues spiritual

counselling is appropriate for counselling centres or institutions and pastoral counselling is suitable for a congregation setting, while acknowledging both are helping relationships.

The purpose of the book, which is to present a discussion on the roles of the relationship and transformative process, is achieved. The reader is offered a discussion of a range of topics related to the helping relationship that many readers may have only explored briefly. Individual chapter topics, though complementary, can also be explored individually.

There are two main potential limitations of the book. First, the topics associated with the helping relationship require knowledge and experience of it. A clinician with familiarity and experience with the intricacies of the helping relationship, rather than an inexperienced therapist, is more likely to be able to connect with the content and grow from it. Thus, the book overall is better suited for the experienced clinician.

Second, although the helping relationship concept crosses professions and the book strives to be applicable to numerous professions, there are challenges with this wide focus. One such challenge is exploring topics with depth and specificity simultaneously to several professions. The challenge lies in the uniqueness of each profession. Because each profession has its own nuances, roles, clientele, and code of ethics, a book such as *The Helping Relationship* does not explore with depth and specificity topics associated with the specific professions. Further, attempting to include content applicable to a range of professions may lead the reader to simply choose a profession-specific book. These limitations are minimized if the reader reviews the purpose of the book and then decides if the book will meet their need.

The authors of the book provide an interesting overview of the helping relationship through presentation of original research, personal theory, and theory arising from clinical experience and literature review. The topics presented offered me, the reader and practitioner, a range of topics that many training programs present only briefly. Thus the reader is given the opportunity to explore relevant clinical topics such as transference and countertransference or the impact on the relationship, in the midst of pressure, to offer brief therapy. By normalizing the helping relationship in general and then with specific concepts, the reader can identify and relate to the topics. This enabled me to connect to the discussion in a personal way. Overall, the range of topics presented, all related to a topic critical to counsellors (i.e., the helping relationship), will be of interest to all counsellors who desire to maximize the change process of clients.

About the Author

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