

Book Reviews

Editors' note As of this issue, Judith A. Gravdal, MD, has taken on the position of our journal's Book and Electronic Media Review Editor. Dr Gravdal is Morris M. Goldberg Chair of Family Medicine, Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, Illinois, USA. We'd like to welcome her on board.

Helping Young People to Beat Stress: A Practical Guide

SARAH MCNAMARA

Continuum, New York (2005)

114 pp., ISBN 0-8264-8755-6

This book is an update of McNamara's 2000 book *Stress in young people: what's new and what can we do?* The intended audience includes teachers, physicians and other caregivers or caring adults who interact with adolescents. McNamara sets out to provide the information and tools needed when assisting young people as they make their way between Scylla and Charybdis. The goal in working with adolescents is to enable them to identify their stressors and to develop skills and strategies that will allow them to reduce or manage their stress.

In only 114 pages, this book accomplishes much of its intended purpose. The tone and level of writing are appropriate to a lay audience. Professional caregivers might be underwhelmed, but will nonetheless benefit from the review and the strategies that McNamara provides. McNamara's style is conversational and accessible. Adolescents might benefit from reading it themselves.

This thin volume begins with a chapter on "Talking with young people about stress and coping". The next two chapters cover mental and physical strategies for coping with stress. Specific skills are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The study skills section includes information on nutrition, approaches to exams and time management. The chapter on interpersonal and communication skills contains suggestions about assertiveness, negotiation, support and bullying.

The final content chapter is entitled "Treating yourself right". Self-confidence and self-esteem enhancement strategies are discussed. The chapter closes with comments on unhappiness and depression and worry and anxiety. The book concludes with a recap of its intended purpose and a brief discussion of "Programme implementation" and "The socioeconomic dimension to research".

The focus of this book is what an individual can do when working with an individual adolescent. Only 114 pages, although convenient, seems inadequate to the content and the importance of the topic. Feasible strategies are introduced to the reader. More documentation about the use and efficacy would be valuable. The statement, "Many of the skills included have been shown to bolster

self-esteem and improve academic performance and well-being while reducing anxiety” (p. 113) is not well substantiated for the reader.

Intervention programs that have been developed and implemented deserve more attention. Less than three pages are devoted to describe and critique programs. Not all prevention and intervention projects (for instance the Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project) are discussed. In 1982, McNamara and Johnson challenged those of us who work with children that “a major task for the future will be the development of intervention programmes for helping children cope with stressful events”. A more thorough and critical appraisal of such programs would be useful.

Cultural sensitivity and cultural competencies are not addressed in this book. Adults working with adolescents from different cultural backgrounds need appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills when working with these youth. The author suggests, on p. 109, the significant need for research on this. An expanded section on cultural issues/cross-cultural difference would be valuable.

Helping young people to recognize and manage stress has great importance to the quality of their adolescent years. The ramifications of intervention during adolescence will also be felt in adulthood. The problem is significant. In the United States in 2000, the second leading cause of death among adolescents was homicide (CDC, 2006) and the third leading cause of death was suicide (Anderson, 2002). The 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance data further details the scope and depth of the problems (Grunbaum *et al.*, 2002). The international incidence during a given school term of bullying behavior as reported by students, ranges from 15–70% (King *et al.*, 1994; Nansel *et al.*, 2001).

The contribution of this book is primarily to community-based, lay adults who work with adolescents. They are often present at a time of crisis and serve an extremely critical role in supporting the mental health and development of young adults. This guide is indeed practical and serves this need.

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Motivational Practice. Promoting Healthy Habits and Self-care of Chronic Diseases

RICHARD J. BOTELHO

MHH Publications, USA (2004)

323 pp., ISBN 0-9706738-5-X

Physicians learn and master the medical model of care, applying it to diagnose and treat human *illness*. Nurses also learn the medical model of care, but their focus is on the diagnosis and treatment of the *human response to illness*. A physician's education is focused on *the disease, illness, or injury*, while a nurse's education is focused on *how the disease, illness, or injury affects the person*. The two professions intersect somewhere in the center. This book breaks out of the traditional medical model mode by describing linear and nonlinear, patient-centered, *holistic approaches to care*. This type of approach causes the practitioner to view each patient as a whole person, with many strengths and needs. We cannot force change on patients or on ourselves. For example, we can force patients to stop smoking in the health care facility, but if the patient is not motivated to quit, he or she will resume this unhealthy habit immediately upon discharge. For positive change to be effective, one must be motivated to make the change in the first place. This book teaches professionals to motivate patients (and themselves) to change by making healthy decisions about their lives, their care, their living conditions, and daily routines.

Although the book does not ignore the significance of evidence-based guidelines, it does not promote rigid adherence to them. Instead, it shows the practitioner how to improve his or her communication skills. Applying these techniques motivates change and enhances meaningful exchange with patients. For optimum success, the reader begins the journey by learning to change him or herself. Mastering the concepts and principles of personal and professional change facilitates a subtle change in professional practice. The practitioner moves gradually from the role of "fixer" into the role of "motivator". Following each step in the book, which is a workbook format, promotes mastery of the material, while promoting personal and professional growth. The author recommends introspective journaling during this adventure, as a means of identifying new material and applying it to what

you do professionally. By using this method of chronicling your learning, the reader develops self-awareness and reflection, which is useful in relating to patients. It inspires the reader to make positive personal change, while applying ethical, perceptual, emotional, and cognitive principles of adult education.

Motivational Practice appeals to a wide audience. The book is clearly written and understandable. It avoids technical jargon, making it a useful tool for professionals and patients alike. It is a useful adjunct to classes about personal health, but is also appropriate for the self-help section of the bookstore. The author has done a commendable job in inspiring the reader to change, as well as learning how to motivate change in patients and others. Quality care lies in a combination of education, mentoring, and personal motivation. The author's passion for good personal health is a motivating force for this book. The approach and writing style are down to earth and refreshing. His compassion, refusal to accept the status quo, quest for information, and willingness to share a wealth of knowledge with others were an inspiration to this reader, and I am sure the book will inspire other professionals as well. A companion guidebook, *Motivate Healthy Habits: Stepping Stones to Change* will be a useful adjunct to the reader.

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