

BOOK REVIEWS

It is Journal policy to review books that we can recommend to our readers.

Practicing Harm Reduction Psychotherapy: An Alternative Approach to Addictions, by Patt Denning. New York: Guilford Press, 2000, 262 + xxv pages, \$32.50 (cloth).

This well-written book presents an approach for integrating harm reduction therapy into everyday psychotherapeutic practice. Denning describes a clinical intervention strategy for working with substance abusers that draws on cognitive-behavioral, motivational, psychodynamic and interpersonal approaches to treatment. This text is written primarily for general psychotherapists wishing to add substance abuse treatment to their practice. It would also be useful in training graduate students in the integration of addictions treatment into everyday clinical practice—a useful skill to possess given the high rates of addictive disorders in the general population. The tone of this book reflects the harm reduction approach itself: The author presents the material in a nonthreatening manner that allows the reader flexibility in applying aspects of this intervention to his/her own clinical work.

The volume is divided into three sections. The first, Overview of Harm Reduction Psychotherapy, defines harm reduction and presents a historical account of its development (chapters 1 and 2). The second, Harm Reduction Psychotherapy in Action, presents a treatment program based on harm reduction principles that can be integrated into general psychotherapy practice (chapters 3-6). The last section, Integrating the New with the Old, discusses applications of this model to other settings (chapter 7).

Chapter 1 presents the author's view of addiction. These views are generally derived from well-supported research and are undoubtedly shared by most cognitive-behavioral and harm reduction clinicians and researchers. Difficult issues are addressed directly; for example, the question of whether or not it is okay for the client to "get high" is discussed in its proper historical context, including the somewhat arbitrary designation of legal versus illegal drugs. The necessity of understanding one's own views toward addicts and addiction is emphasized, given the importance of those views with respect to the therapeutic alliance. Throughout the book the author maintains that clients are better served if they are allowed to make their own decisions, with the therapist providing guidance. Although certainly not radical, some of the views expressed run counter to those in the traditional substance abuse treatment community. The author does a good job of exposing these differences and attempting to build a bridge between them. For example, the term "denial" is redefined as a common tendency to hide negative traits from others. It is a behavior that impedes therapy and client progress but is not unique to substance abusers. Chapter 2 discusses the harm reduction concept and how it differs from traditional approaches to treating sub-

stance abuse. The harm reduction approach is presented in the context of the public health approach from which it is derived. Several clinical cases are presented that clearly illustrate problems with rigid applications of traditional, disease-oriented approaches. The author stresses that therapists must be flexible in their approach to working with clients and need to take into account a client's current motivation, resistance and fears.

Chapter 3 discusses the importance of a broad-based, ongoing assessment of the client's mental health and substance abuse status, his/her motivation to change, and stated goals with respect to substance use. The need for constant reassessment of goals and strategies in working with substance abusers, based on both conceptual (e.g., transference issues) and practical (e.g., client can only attend therapy once per month) considerations, is highlighted. Chapter 4 discusses the nuts and bolts of harm reduction psychotherapy. It addresses many practical issues such as handling ambivalence, setting treatment goals, deciding on the optimal intensity of intervention, cultural factors, developing trust, issues of attachment (both to the therapist and to alcohol and drugs), working with affect, and coping skills. Chapter 5 presents cases that illustrate the key aspects of this approach. Chapter 6 discusses concerns related to multidagnosis patients, which include differential diagnosis of symptoms attributable to substance use versus a mental disorder, and medication strategies. Particularly helpful is a presented case in which the author gives an example of how to conduct therapy in the presence of intense resistance and cognitive confusion, and without the benefit of a clear diagnosis.

The final chapter discusses the application of harm reduction principles to community settings such as group homes and community residences, and to case consultation work. Examples are used to illustrate the approach in dealing with resistance from staff in these community settings. The appendices are helpful and include the psychological and pharmacological effects of the most common drugs, the history of alcohol and drug use in the United States, a self-help reading list and a description of the most popular approaches to treating alcohol and drug use.

Although this book is generally based on scientifically validated models, the author occasionally relies on less supported ideas, such as Khantzian's Self-Medication Hypothesis or Alexander's Adaptive Model of Addiction. Also, the last chapter seems out of place: The applicability of the harm reduction approach to community settings and to case consultation is not sufficiently developed (compared with other chapters discussing psychotherapy) and deserves more in-depth coverage, perhaps in a separate book.

Denning is an experienced and compassionate therapist who is able to convey the complexity of treating individuals with a sub-

stance abuse problem and, at the same time, help the reader to develop a framework to guide his/her own work. This book provides clinicians, educators and graduate students with a practical approach to treating addictions in the context of other mental health issues. It is hoped that, having read this book, more psychotherapists will be willing to provide addictions treatment in the context of their general practice.

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Alcohol Use Among Adolescents, by Michael Windle. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999, 126 + x pages, \$74.95 (cloth), \$32.95 (paper).

This book, the forty-second volume in Sage Publications' Developmental Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry Series, provides a concise and highly readable overview of current knowledge regarding alcohol use and misuse by teenagers. Its five chapters cover the following areas: scope of adolescent alcohol use, measurement and diagnosis, risk and protective factors, prevention and intervention approaches, conceptual and methodological issues and future research directions. The book's author, a developmental psychologist, is one of the nation's leading experts in the area of risk factors and adolescent drinking.

This is an excellent primer for anyone interested in adolescent alcohol use and misuse. The author achieves his stated goal of providing "representative coverage to a broad and rapidly expanding literature." While necessarily limited in depth because of its brevity and breadth, the book addresses the majority of important issues in the area of adolescent drinking. As a result, this volume would be an excellent addition to the required reading list for doctoral-level classes on the addictions, adolescence, or developmental psychopathology. It is probably too brief to serve as a

stand-alone text, but could serve as a primary reference with appropriate supplemental materials.

I was disappointed by the book's relative lack of attention to how issues related to race, ethnicity and culture may influence adolescent drinking. Another area that receives limited attention is the relation between drinking and smoking during the teenage years. Use and misuse of alcohol and nicotine tend to start in adolescence, and use of the two substances and their short- and long-term consequences can be interrelated. However, despite these limitations, I would give high ratings to the overall quality of this book.

A particular strength is the chapter devoted to conceptual and methodological issues and future research directions. The author does an excellent job of identifying several areas for future research, such as sources of individual variation in alcohol use and misuse, bidirectional relations between alcohol use and developmental tasks, conceptual and statistical models for representing risk and protective factors, causal relations between intervention components and intervention outcomes, community-level influences, and comparisons of alternative treatment approaches. These areas of research have not received sufficient attention and are essential for the advancement of the science of adolescent alcohol use and misuse.

In summary, this book is a welcome addition to the literature on alcohol use and misuse among teenagers. I am glad to have it on my bookshelf and have begun to recommend it to students and colleagues interested in adolescent substance use and misuse. It is surprisingly comprehensive and well-referenced for such a short volume, and offers an excellent initiation to the scientific literature on alcohol use and misuse among adolescents.

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