**Book News**

**Therapeutic Work with Children and Young People**  
B. Copley & B. Forryan  

**Child Centred Play Therapy**  
(2nd Edn.)  
J. West  

Here are two sound, useful books, written from different perspectives and intended to help workers in Health (including psychiatrists and psychologists), Social Services, and Education in their professional encounters with children and adolescents. Both books have been thoroughly updated since the first editions, to take into account developments in practice and changes in the law.

An understanding of the crucial interactive processes between worker and client or patient receives scant attention in most professional training but forms the focus of Copley and Forryan’s approach. Both authors are experienced child psychotherapists with an interest in extending psychodynamic ideas to work in different settings. They have jointly taught a multidisciplinary course on individual work at the Centre for Postgraduate Psychiatry, Ufculme Clinical, Birmingham. The format of *Therapeutic work with children and young people* is based upon work discussion seminars, a model of teaching developed at the Tavistock Clinic, in which participants from different professional backgrounds come together to think about difficult issues or problems. The content and length of the work will vary in different settings, but Copley and Forryan emphasise the universal importance of learning to listen, not to rush in with premature solutions, to notice nonverbal communication, to pay attention to boundaries, and to make a proper ending. They keep jargon to the minimum and the work comes to life, frequently in a moving way, A final section expands the theoretical concepts of psychoanalytic understanding, and the text is well written.

**Child centred play therapy** is written from a different, more eclectic viewpoint. The value of play therapy in treating troubled children is becoming increasingly recognised and is frequently ill defined. Janet West, a former probation officer with 16 years play therapy experience, warns against the attempt at play therapy by those without adequate professional training, and against ‘interpretation’ in individual work with children without sufficient professional underpinning. This book is not just for aspiring play therapists and could be read, with profit, by trainees in child psychology and psychiatry, and others working in child mental health settings. Many of their practical questions about professional contact with children would be answered by this readable and comprehensive book, which provides case studies and practice exercises. Legal, ethnic, and ethical issues are all well addressed.

**The Scared Child: Helping Kids Overcome Traumatic Events**  
B. Brooks & F. M. Siegel  

This is a Trauma Handbook, a do-it-yourself manual intended mainly for parents and other lay people to help children overcome the effects of traumatic experience. It is divided into two parts, with a preliminary section giving an overview of trauma, how to recognise post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children, and how the debriefing method works. A second section covers a variety of traumatic experiences that can occur during a child’s life.

With the very best of intentions to provide help for distressed children, the authors have found PTSD to be all-pervasive, occurring in troubling life events that are said to traumatise children and adolescents, from bereavement, abuse, divorce, and natural disasters. There is a danger that normal responses to stressful events are given a pathological label, but are paradoxically minimised by the four-step debriefing method proposed by the authors. I am wary of ‘trauma’ being used rather loosely in the book and the ‘anyone can do it’ approach to psychological intervention that is being conveyed. Trauma is essentially a complex and relatively uncommon psychological phenomenon and PTSD is a serious medical condition requiring specialist therapeutic intervention. Not all children who are victims of traumatic experience develop PTSD, and it is important to be able to distinguish this from appropriate grief reactions.

The underlying message, however, is that ‘it is good to talk’. Parents can help their children to begin the process of making sense of distressing experiences by communicating with each other and by talking about what has happened. The book suggests ways to make this possible, but it must be remembered that parents are not their children’s doctors or therapists. Where there is serious disturbance, professional help is advisable.

**Children and Grief: When a Parent Dies**  
J. W. Worden  

The book is divided into three main sections. Part I deals with the consequences for children and their families of the death of a parent; Part II compares these findings to those experienced by children who lost a sibling by death or a parent through divorce; and Part III addresses intervention issues.

In the first section the findings of the Harvard Child Bereavement Study are presented in language accessible to a wide range of readers. It succeeds in combining the scientific rigour of a well-designed, longitudinal, matched control study with clinical vignettes and useful summary points at the end of each chapter. It includes important themes, such as how the child responds to the parent’s death, mediating factors, and children at risk.

In Part II the author compares his findings with studies that used similar instruments but instead researched the loss of a parent through divorce or the loss of a sibling by death. This comparison was not as eloquent and fluent as the original one and leaves the reader wishing that the author had included one of these groups as a comparison in the original study.
In the section dealing with intervention issues, the author attempts to identify those suffering from a serious adjustment disorder, hence in need of early intervention, from those who merely struggle to adjust. It does not clarify this difficult task sufficiently.

The book concludes by offering a useful summary and description of the instruments used in the original study. It also offers a list of suggested reading that can assist anyone looking for more specialised information such as intervention with bereaved children or children and divorce.

The strengths of the book include a very clear and didactic description of a well-designed study of childhood bereavement and the potential interest to a wide range of disciplines.

Carmen Clemente
The Royal Free Hospital, London

J. D. Berrick, R. Barth, & N. Gilbert

State-of-the-art research in child welfare, it is claimed, is represented in this multi-authored book. Given that there has not always been a strong relationship between child welfare issues and child psychology and psychiatry research, this book shows that standards are rising. The contributors are mainly professors in U.S. Schools of Social Work and so U.K. readers looking for references to British studies may find their approach rather parochial.

The volume consists of 11 chapters divided into 4 sections. It begins with child neglect, and the remainder of the book is concerned with alternatives to family separation, including kinship care, foster care (regrettably with risks of subsequent abuse), and family reunification services. These topics are all of pressing interest if the emphasis of partnership with parents and avoidance of state intervention is to become a reality. In relation to each topic the scientific research is examined, as are the practice and social policy implications.

One of the most interesting sections concerns the topic of neglect. The conceptual and definitional issues are intriguing and challenging. Can there be agreement on what constitutes the threshold of neglectful parenting? What specific components of neglect are harmful? Gaudin and Dubowitz provide a very useful service by reviewing a related series of studies on child neglect, all of which employed matched comparison groups of families without evidence of neglect and used a variety of data collection methods, including direct observation. They concluded that poverty adversely affects the functioning of all families and therefore aspects of family life in both groups overlap a good deal. However, low self-esteem in mothers and poor nurturing skills appear to distinguish the neglect group. The authors argue both for a determined attack on poverty as well as early intervention programmes to promote positive parent–child interaction and to help young mothers re-evaluate the influence of their childhoods and to make the link with interactions with their own children.

Alan Rushton
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The Clinical Interview of the Adolescent: From Assessment and Formulation to Treatment Planning
F. D. Kelly

This book presents the clinical wisdom of its author, presumably gained over many years, loosely arranged around the theme of clinical interview and assessment. The style is conversational. The material has a more psychodynamic emphasis than would commonly be used by practitioners in the U.K. I imagine that this material would work very well as a series of lectures, seminars, tutorials, and supervised clinical teaching. It is probably best used as a source to dip into to find the author’s views on a particular area.

Tony Jaffa
Section of Developmental Psychiatry, University of Cambridge

Books by Members
Simon Baron-Cohen (Ed)
The Maladapted Mind: Classic Readings in Evolutionary Psychopathology