Play Therapy: Theory and Practice
Kevin O’Connor & Lisa Mages Braverman (Eds)

This is an interesting book that will certainly be useful to many readers of the Review. It presents the (fictitious) case history of a 7-year-old American boy, Jason, who has aggressive and acting-out behaviour problems and whose mother has been referred to Child Protective Services for bruises on his face. We learn about Jason’s developmental and family history, and his scores on a variety of pre-treatment assessment data.

There then follow 13 chapters by proponents of different approaches to play therapy. Each chapter has in common a description of the approach: its application to the case history including the goals for treatment, a description of the treatment, and the expected outcome. This format works well. It allows the reader both to learn the essentials of each method, and to see the similarities and differences of approach between methods. Although there are some commonalities, for example in allowing a fairly nondirective experience with toys over a number of sessions, there are also differences in the extent to which limits are set; the extent of directiveness by the therapist (e.g. higher in cognitive-behavioural play therapy and developmental play therapy), the number of sessions required (e.g. higher in psychoanalytic play therapy), the extent of involvement of the parents (high in filial therapy, which involves parents directly in the play process; and in fostering attachment through family therapy) and family, including Jason’s younger sister (as in the final two chapters on family play therapy).

What is lacking in the book is any explicit comparison of the different approaches. This might have been undertaken by the editors, but the first editor contributes a long chapter himself on ecosystemic play therapy, and may have felt it would be invidious to make evaluations of other therapies work, or work best, and whether they justify sometimes intensive resources (e.g. personal attention from the therapist for at least two or three times per week, in the case of psychoanalytic play therapy) is not seriously considered. Nevertheless, the book works well in its own terms, and is often enlivened by imagined dialogues or play sequences between the therapist and Jason. As such, it can be read through with interest, or used as a source book for understanding the now considerable number of varieties of play therapy on offer.

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Schools and Family Therapy: Using Systems Theory and Family Therapy in the Resolution of School Problems
William M. Walsh & G. Robert Williams (Eds)

This is a welcome addition to the scarce body of literature focusing on the application of systems theory to the understanding of the relationship between families and schools functioning. The editors have organised the book in four sections. Section I provides the conceptual framework. Section II refers to specific treatment models, Section III documents specific school/family programmes, and Section IV focuses on training for school/family therapy. Given that the book consists of 15 chapters written by different contributors, it presents a fairly coherent view about the need to focus interventions on the interrelationships between families and schools.

The introduction emphasises that the book is about changing not only the behaviour of troubled pupils but the way educators and other professionals think about students and the way to influence them. The theoretical section is perhaps over simplistic, but the chapter on family power provides a useful focus on family strengths and the way these can be utilised to move from a problem-oriented to a collaborative relationship between families and school staff. Section II focuses on structural, strategic, and solution-focused interventions. Chapter 8 provides an excellent summary of structural theory and techniques applicable in the school setting. Chapter 12, Section III describes an interesting example of inter-agency collaboration in the creation of a school-based family support centre.

The final section concentrates on training programmes for school counsellors, who are unfortunately a dying breed in British schools, but it also highlights the need for school psychologists to develop family therapy skills. This book will be a useful read for educational psychologists and other mental health professionals working with schools and it would be a welcome addition to the reading lists of educational psychology training courses.

Emilia Dowling
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The Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Treatment Planner
Arthur E. Jongsm, L. Mark Peterson, & William P. McIntosh

This is a U.S. manual for planning treatment. It consists of an introduction, 29 highly structured chapters on clinical topics, and two appendices. The introduction gives a rationale for the use of this type of book. It outlines developments in the U.S. leading to the current system of managed care, which includes the use of ‘treatment plans’. Steps in the making of such a plan are described. Each chapter gives several behavioural definitions in a particular problem area. It then goes through a list of long-term treatment goals, giving short-term objectives and possible therapeutic interventions. A useful appendix gives a (U.S.) list of resources for therapists and clients. A major omission, however, is a proper index. This creates the impression that the book is merely an advertisement for a future (and much more expensive) electronic hypertext version.

Would we buy this book? Hopefully, the climate for treatment in the U.K. will never become rigid enough to necessitate the use of books like this. The rather concrete, manualised approach does not always suit clinical practice. From a U.K. perspective ‘psychodynamics’ are under-represented in this eclectic approach. However, we applied this book to some current cases and also let colleagues try it out, which
Certainly generated interest in it. For the prepared novice it points out additional aspects of a problem. For the seasoned veteran it provides a checklist for comparison with actual practice. It provides concise ways to formulate parts of letters and can help to sharpen the planning and description of treatment.

This cut and dried U.S. approach could be useful as an aide-memoire. An electronic version would be a welcome tool in our fully computerised service of the future.

Rini Hoogkamer and Lynn Barnett
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Counselling Children: A Practical Introduction
Kathryn Geldard & David Geldard

This is an important text for any new councillor working with young children. It challenges the idea of using only one counselling approach. The authors see each child client as unique and apply an eclectic view to both the approach they use and the medium to explore it. This enables the reader to gain some important insights into what children need from a counsellor.

The authors offer some refreshing ways of addressing some difficult issues, which the experienced counsellor would find helpful: how to involve parents and carers in the counselling process without breaking confidentiality; how to offer a counselling contract that can be understood by a child; how to help the child tell their story while dealing with resistance and transference.

There is a useful section on the history of counselling children. Locating where the ideas of working with children come from; linking the work of the early pioneers—the Freuds and the Winnicotts, with various theorists of child development—Erikson and Bowlby, through to a range of therapeutic approaches—Axline, Rogers and Glasser. What the authors do is leave the reader wanting more, to explore what appeals to you as a counsellor.

The second half of the book is devoted to play therapy and how important it is not to become too dependant on talking and listening therapies that are primarily designed for adults. The selecting of the appropriate media from books/stories, clay, drawing, finger-painting, games, pretend play/journeys, puppets/soft toys, sandtray, worksheets, miniature animals—the list seems endless—that would best suit the child, their age, and the counselling setting they are in, whether individual, family, or group work.

The authors recognise that counselling approaches need to be varied to suit specific cultures, but they have not attempted to address particular cultural issues. The book does not look at general child protection issues (only how a child might protect themselves) and does not refer to the U.K. child care law, but reflects the authors’ experience of working in the U.S. and Australia.

There is some good advice for any counsellor who attempts to relate to a child client as a parent, a teacher, an aunt or uncle, a peer, or a blank sheet—go to see your supervisor as soon as possible.

To sum up, this book opens up the whole range of ways of communicating in counselling. Recognising what appeals to children, and to you the counsellor, is far more likely to work than any absolute theory that has no room for our uniqueness.

Peter Eldrid
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Counselling Children with Special Needs
Gill Brearley

This is a short and easily read book that addresses a very important and difficult subject. Although referring to all children with special needs, it particularly addresses counselling those children with severely handicapping physical illness, including those who face premature death. The author has a wealth of experience in this area which she uses to bring her work to life, through her many moving illustrations of counselling sessions.

The book is well laid out in a logical format. After discussing the effects of disability in the early chapters, the emotional implications are considered, and then specific counselling skills are described at the end. I found the choice of bereavement as a model to understand the emotional impact of disability particularly useful. Anger, grief, guilt, denial, and despair receive special treatment in separate chapters.

The section on methods to use when children have communication problems was enlightening. I particularly agreed with the stress placed by the author on the importance of supervision and the personal support for counsellors working in such an emotionally demanding area.

I found two areas of weakness. First, I did not think that enough emphasis was placed on the need for consultation with child and adolescent mental health services, either for psychiatric assessment, not only in cases of disturbance but also depression, or in order that alternative treatment methods, including more intensive psychotherapy, could be considered. Second, I was concerned that not enough consideration was given to the need to involve parents when children are being counselled. This may have been due to the fact that the author appeared to confuse the need to inform parents that their child is being treated with a break of confidentiality, as if discussing the content of a session.

Overall, I think this book has much to recommend it. It will be useful to a wide range of professionals, particularly those working in hospital and community child health settings.

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