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BOOK REVIEWS

Sue Pattinson, Maggie Robson, Ann Beynon, *The Handbook of Counseling Children and Young People*, British Association for Counseling & Psychotherapy (Sage Publication: 2015, ISBN: 9781446252994), Pages: 500, Price: £29.99.

– **Simran J. Bhatia**

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The field of counseling children and young people is rapidly developing in recent years, the delivery of counsel, various approaches to counseling and the nature of counseling interventions is increasing in number and range and being applied across an increasing variety of contexts. The book, *Counseling Children and Young People*, brings evidences to readers of how therapeutic work with children, young people and related services has developed historically. The book is set on specific values and principles, the rights of the children, the need to keep the child as the centre of the therapeutic work and serves as a comprehensive guide to the field of counseling.

Sue Pattinson is a lecturer in Education and Counseling at Newcastle University. Her main areas of study and interest are the social and emotional health as well as well-being of children and young people. Maggie Robson is a senior teaching fellow in counseling psychology at Keele University. She is also a qualified play therapist and has a special interest in working with, and researching, children's bereavement. Ann Beynon has worked as a teacher, counselor, trainer and device manager for the last 40 years. She is working as a counselor in the development of effective learning relationships in education and community settings.

This book covers various issues which fall under the humanistic and generic competencies. Competencies identified in the book include knowledge of child and family development and transitions; and knowledge and understanding of mental health issues. Additionally, it also mentions additional information about the legal aspects of the field, professional and ethical frameworks, and the ability to work with confidentiality and consent issues.

The authors have noticed that there are many challenges in improving the quality and provision of support for the mental health of children and young people. Statistics show that the suicide rate among this age group is on the rise and the level of well-being of children and young people is falling. Not only the issues of quality training of

a counselor but also the data based on evidence, which is required to ensure effective provision, are addressed in this book.

The book comprises of four sections, each independent of the other yet intrinsically linked together. The sections are: Theory and Practice Approaches; Counseling Practices and Processes; Practical Issues; and Practice Settings. The book brings out the fundamental theories and research skills addressed across these four sections in a broad manner.

The chapter ‘Theory and Practice Approaches’ talks about a range of therapeutic approaches in the context of helping children and young people through various ages and stages. Child development and attachment; the child centered approach; psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral therapy, gestalt theory, transactional analysis, play therapy and other creative approaches; and features of integrative practice along with its challenges and benefits are included. The authors refer to the principles fundamental to counseling work and relevant research. Age appropriate interventions, therapies, reflections and case studies have been well documented throughout the book.

‘Counseling Practices and Processes’ refers to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provision in the UK. CAMHS provision is organized around a four-tier system of assessment and delivery of services. This section examines the nature of the process that can take place when counseling children and looks into the referral and indications for therapies. The author quotes, “A ‘collaborative assessment’ is essential for safe and effective preparation for therapy with children and young people.” Therapeutic alliance, the counseling process and therapeutic skills are also included in this section. The author also sheds light upon the dissonance that occurs between different the various elements of development and how the therapist needs to use therapeutic skills to attend the whole client experience.

The next section on ‘Counseling Practice Issues’ talks about the key aspects of the laws and policies; ethics; diversity; bereavement; depression; suicide and self-harm; sexual, physical and emotional abuse and eating disorders. The book not only mentions about a rights-based model which pens the rights of young people and the ‘confidential space’ in which the counselors do their valuable work but also about the approaches to such ethics. It also follows a very broad distinction, made between children, i.e. 6–11 years and young people, i.e. 11–18 years. Further chapters also talk about the trans-cultural work settings; neurological development, damage and causes; and communicating styles with disabled children like the deaf and mute and the also the ones who have learning disabilities. The most common treatments talked about in the last chapter of eating disorders includes family based treatment, individual adolescent-focused therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

The chapter on ‘Practice Settings’ identifies and examines working in a range of contexts, statutory health and social health care services; non-statutory services, for example, the third sector; school and educational settings and it also mentions about

the extending practices and new horizons i.e. through technology and the internet. Common means of online one-to-one counseling are also discussed.

Towards the end, each chapter not only engages the reader with an informative review of each topic but also includes a set of questions for further reflection with suggestions for reading to explore the topics in depth.

Counseling practitioners bring new ideas into this field and also adapt concepts, ideas and tools already developed, including therapeutic approaches. The diversity of the counseling field is on the rise and increasing opportunities for interdisciplinary work, bearing in mind the increasing demand for practice based on research evidence. This book helps us understand, identify, clarify, reflect upon and work with the interventions and techniques that apply to the practice of counseling children and young people.