

BOOK REVIEW

Children and Adolescent in Trauma: Creative Therapeutic Approaches

Edited by Chris Nicholson, Michael Irwin and Kedar Nath Dwivedi; ISBN: 978-1-84310-437-7, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, UK, 2010, Pages: 251

Trauma in the formative years of life often leads to deleterious consequences. Effective treatment of traumatized children and adolescent is of paramount importance. A mental health professional must be equipped with special expertise to deal with this problem. To work with traumatized children and adolescent is difficult. It is often a team work incorporating different approaches. A professional in isolation will not be able to offer effective services to these group of people. When a traumatized child, feels that he has no control of a situation, he will predictably get more symptomatic. If a child is given some choice or some element of control in an activity or in an interaction, he will feel safer, comfortable and will be able to feel, think and act in a positive way. The book "Children and Adolescent in Trauma: Creative Therapeutic approaches" offers insight into this baffling subject.

The editor of this book, Chris Nicholson, is a lecturer in the Centre for psychoanalytic studies at the University of Essex. Nicholson has vast experience of working in a range of Children's service. Michael Erwin is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Kent. Kedar Nath Dwivedi is a visiting professor at the London Metropolitan University and Director of the International Institute of Child and Adolescent Mental Health. Formerly he served as a consultant child psychiatrist at Northampton General Hospital. The contributors of this book also include psychotherapist, psychiatric nurse and manager of in-patient adolescent unit and art therapist. So, the vast experiences of these professionals working with traumatized children are put together in this comprehensive book.

The book consists of thirteen chapters written by eight different authors. For the benefit of the reader there is an introduction followed by five main parts- Trauma, Story, Self-harm, Art Therapy and Violence. Each topic is discussed in different chapters so that the reader can smoothly understand the subject. The authors described the concepts that relate to psychodynamic and therapeutic community principles through story, art, film and biography and case studies

This book provides a new approach to understanding traumatized children and adolescent and highlights a variety of creative therapeutic approaches for this group in different residential settings – children's home, secure or psychiatric units and special schools. The approaches include art therapy, literature and story telling. The authors explored how creative methods are applied in cases of abuse, trauma, violence self-harm and identity development. The authors discussed the impact of abuse and maltreatment on mental health drawing links between psychoanalytic theory and practice and study of literature and the arts. The potential of using the creative arts such as film, biography, sculpture, painting, poetry and stories in training to convey psychoanalytic concepts to those working with traumatized children is stressed. The book may be used as a training material as most of the standard textbook on child and adolescent psychiatry cannot afford to discuss this topic in such a detail and pragmatic way. We would like to recommend this book to all busy practitioners who are dealing with problems of children and adolescents.

The contents of the book are clearly written. Chapter one describes the problematic nature of traumatic

experiences, their effects and management. The second chapter stressed upon predictability of an ordered daily routine for traumatized young people. Using corollary from the biography and poetry the author described the early life traumatic war experience and subsequent post-traumatic stress disorder of the poet Robert Graves. Chapter three and four narrates neurobiology of trauma and the impact of trauma on brain development taking example from Hitchcock's film *Marine*. A range of treatment options like eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) and their appropriateness is discussed. In chapter five Christine Bradley discussed early trauma from psychotherapist's perspective using analogy from children's story, *The Velveteen Rabbit*. In chapter six, Prof. K. N. Dwivedi from his vast experience of using stories within a group setting based on long tradition of story telling in India explores how story telling can enable therapeutic change. Therapeutic benefit of story telling is supported by a number of fascinating stories. Chapter seven and eight deals with self-harm. In these chapters Chris Nicholson shows how self-harm can also be seen as an attempt at recreating the self rather than self-destruction using case examples. Episodes of self-harm may be symbolic representations of early abusive acts. Chapter nine and ten provides an introduction to art therapy and its role in enabling

traumatized young people to work through severely damaging life events such as neglect, violence and sexual abuse with striking case examples. In chapter eleven the factors implicated in childhood violence and how these children can be helped within a therapeutic community setting are discussed. In chapter twelve Chris Nicholson explores adolescent violence and its relationship with poor early attachment and parenting. The attachment theory is re-examined in this chapter using the children's poetry of A.A. Milne.

The intention of the editor to promote innovative and creative practice in working with traumatized young people is mostly successful. This book can also serve the purpose of training manual for the staff engaged in this work. This book will be of immense help for practitioners of various mental health traditions- social workers, psychotherapists, art therapists, psychiatrists, residential child care workers, teachers, counsellors, psychologists and students in these fields as well as parents, teachers and interested lay people. As the Editor hoped in the preface, we also expect that definitely the book will provide nourishment for all those who are working often without thanks and in very challenging circumstances, to provide therapeutic care and education for the troubled young people.

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