

## Book Reviews

Barton, S., Gonzalez, R., & Tomlinson, P. (2012). *Therapeutic residential child care for children and young people: An attachment and trauma-informed model for practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 287 pp., ISBN 978 1 84905 255 9 (pb), £22.99.

This book aims to provide an understanding of childhood trauma and its impact on child development. Emphasizing the use of the entirety of day-to-day life, it provides a therapeutic model of care that aims to facilitate recovery based on different child development theories practised and experienced at the Lighthouse Foundation in Australia. This book provides a thoroughly engaging and relevant read for any person interested in therapeutic residential child care.

The authors begin by explaining the importance of a theoretical base for all within an organization that works with severely traumatized children. The theory presented stems from a psychodynamic, attachment-based and neurobiological approach. A theoretical understanding of the impact of the wider community on child development is also emphasized. The model therefore focuses on work with the individual, group, home, organization and the community.

After presenting theoretical content, the authors typically go on to explain how this may inform practice and how it does inform practice within the Lighthouse Foundation. They hence go on to explore the impact that trauma has on a person and how to work through its effects by means of care processes and therapeutic ways of work. This provides for a good degree of applicability for the intermediate level practitioner.

Acknowledging that work with traumatized children creates considerable anxiety, the authors describe the effect that this has on staff and how to support staff. They go on to explain the importance of the home environment as a therapeutic tool, explaining how imperative it is that mundane duties show children worth. Given that the children usually come from chaotic homes their experience of a home that values them may be limited if not absent. Everything in the home must therefore speak worth to the children and this is shown in the way adults deal with making the children's beds, cleaning and dealing with the mess children at times purposely create. It is also argued that the home must be a holding environment in how it provides structure, routine and boundaries.

The authors go on to write that abuse has repercussions on all levels of an organization and society. Awareness of a possible re-enactment of trauma in the organization is needed and it is therefore the prerogative of management to be clear on boundaries, containment, authority, change management and vision. The authors also explain how the organization as a community should help children develop a variety of relationships and a circle of care that helps them internalize a more positive view of family and community. Therapeutic group processes aimed at progress for individuals, the community and organization are also discussed.

Every journey comes to an end or a change; the authors explain that leaving care evokes anxiety in all and this must be handled in a sensitive and attuned manner. It is explained that the transitional period must be supported and that relationships after leaving care are ongoing, to be kept within boundaries, and supervised; however, children must be aware that they are still part of the home family. The Lighthouse Foundation provides life membership that tries to emulate the fact that in a regular family, when a child moves out, his family remains forever in his life. This means providing support based on individual needs depending on the issues of the child and his ability to manage independently.

The last chapter discussed is that of outcome-based practice. It entails focusing on the difference that one makes and not just the input or processes. It is argued that a service is useful as long as it reaches desired outcomes for children; however, successful outcomes should be kept within the perspective of what success means for different children. For example, for one child success may mean reintegration into family life whilst for another it means remaining alive.

In conclusion, this book provides a very comprehensive and in-depth analysis of therapeutic residential child care. Whilst I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in the subject, critical reflection is imperative to safeguard against viewing a model as a sole solution and hence limiting growth. Questioning, critique, reflection and development of the model proposed in this book will ensure that the specific and individual needs of each particular child are served.

Miguel Debono  
Student, MSc Advanced Residential Child Care

**Curran, S., Harrison, R., Mackinnon, D. eds. (2013). *Working with Young People (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. Milton Keynes: The Open University. 223pp., ISBN 978-1-4462-7328-9, £24.99.**

This book provides an eclectic mix of subject matter all linked by inclusion in the overarching task or role of 'youth work'. Chapters are clearly titled and most chapters remain faithful to their titles, making the book a useful reference text for practitioners in all kinds of 'youth work' as well as students of social work, social care and health. Although the editors shy away from concisely defining 'youth work', other contributors make some attempt to do so. Ingram and Harris (Chapter 7) claim that 'few people know what youth workers do and youth workers are bad at explaining it'. Their further assertion about the significance of forming good relationships with young people resonates clearly with residential child care, my own field of 'youth work'. The commonality within the 'youth work' workforce is evident throughout the chapters. We all work with young people in the context of a 21<sup>st</sup> century society, living through restrained economic times but actively striving to connect with young people, giving them a voice and enabling them to be supported towards adulthood.

There are three distinct parts to this text and these parts progress from the general sociological, political and social construction discourses of youth through to the nature and ultimately the practices of work with young people. In Part 1 the context for youth work in the UK is laid out with clear and relatively easy to read chapters discussing the societal perceptions of youth, particularly young males, as 'trouble' and how this can lead to what Kehily (Chapter 2) terms 'moral panic'. The sense of community that young people derive from working together as part of a societal subculture to be part of something over which they

exercise control is examined in Chapter 3. Here the author, Brent, sets out the positive aspects of youth subcultures and suggests that wider society could benefit by connecting with the desires for ‘connectedness and excitement’ evidenced by research into what young people themselves get out of membership of such groups. Chapter 5 enters the world of ‘teen brain’ research, examining what this alternative or perhaps complementary area of study could add to or change in current societal perceptions of youth and their actions and behaviours. Further chapters consider the current economic and political pressures that exist for youth work in the UK in general and in the particular field of teenage pregnancy where it is argued policy makers have ignored the largely positive, experiential evidence that teenage parents themselves could have added to the decision making process.

Part 2 contains six chapters looking at elements of the nature of work with young people including ethical thinking and examination of the meaning and purpose of helping in the context of ‘youth work’. In a chapter entitled ‘Every Day is Different’ (Chapter 8) Spence and Delaney stress the prime importance of youth workers ‘being there’ with and for young people, going as far as asserting that all other skills generally associated with effective youth work are irrelevant without that crucial skill. At the same time these writers acknowledge the multi-faceted nature of ‘youth work’ in almost any setting, describing the role as a balancing act between flexibility of practice and the more bureaucratic, administrative tasks. The place and value of informal and social learning, an often mutual learning between youth and worker, is explored in further chapters. This topic forms a bridge between Parts 2 and 3 of the book, where some of the actual practices of working with young people (and their youth workers) provide the final theme.

As a professional supervising child care staff and social work students on placement, the final chapter on supervision as a necessary tool of youth work was of particular interest and relevance. In the conclusion to this chapter, Conradie expresses the view that supervision supports effective working. More importantly for me, however, is her assertion that good supervision can help put us in a ‘better position’ to support the development of the young people with whom we work. Supervision can also help us to analyse and make sense of our experiences, thus enabling us to do work that is often demanding and sometimes distressing. Most of the themes within Part 3 are equally current and real for youth workers in all settings. They resonate with recent policies and guidance on internet security, the perceived damage to society caused by available digital technology and enhancing young people’s participation in defining and shaping youth provision and the environments in which these provisions operate.

In summary I found this book to be grounded in reality, in that it examined many aspects of ‘youth work’ within the political and social here and now. Throughout the chapters, there were many references to the importance of youth workers ‘being there’ for and with young people and of making use of what the young people themselves bring to the setting. More importantly, perhaps, many chapters provided a sense of the value that individual writers place on young people in terms of their worthiness of respect, their ability to support and influence policy and their capacity to work together within groups where they feel they belong. As each contributing writer has his or her own style, some readers may find certain chapters easier to read than others. The general composition of the book, however, makes selective reading easy and worthwhile. This is a good and useful resource for youth work practitioners and those studying for a future role as a ‘youth worker’ in any setting.

Jackie Schiller, MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care  
Unit Manager  
Local authority residential childcare

Bettelheim, B. (1950). *Love is not enough: the treatment of emotionally disturbed children*. Glencoe IL: Free Press 0 02 903280 6

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## Bruno Bettelheim

Bruno Bettelheim (1903-1990) was an Austrian Jew who, before the Second World War, together with his wife, had fostered a girl whom he later described as autistic. He was one of many Jews rounded up and sent to concentration camps but then released in a public gesture in 1939, after which he emigrated to the US. His accounts of concentration camp life were initially vilified (1968) but he was eventually sufficiently accepted to obtain a post at the University of Chicago where he directed the Orthogenic School. *Love is not enough* (1950) was in effect his manifesto for the school and *A home for a heart* (1974) his retrospective on those experiences.

**Key words:** Group therapy, Individual therapy, Parental relationships, Residential care, Unconditional acceptance

## Key Ideas

- Seriously disturbed behaviour is caused by a child's prior experiences.
- Only by using all aspects of a child's environment can it be successfully treated.
- Individual and group therapy can take place within the context of daily interactions.
- Unconditional acceptance of behaviour is needed until the child has established a primary relationship with their carer.
- It is necessary to protect seriously disturbed children from their parents.

## Contents

In the *Introduction* Bettelheim stresses that parenting is more complicated than just 'loving' your children and that the sources of many of the emotional problems in the lives of children lie in the day-to-day interactions between parents and their children in which the adult, not being sure of the appropriate way to behave, communicates this uncertainty to the child. So carers need to be clear where they stand on issues, and children need to be exposed to a range of adults who collectively can cover for each others' hang-ups. Carers should be prepared to admit their mistakes and apologise where necessary while emotionally disturbed children need open relationships which allow them to develop relationships at their own pace rather than those with people with labels, for example 'houseparent', which are tied to a particular role in society.

In **Chapter 1 *The children***, he stresses that children who have experienced abnormal behaviour may regard it as normal and first have to learn what is normal behaviour. This can best be explored in everyday settings, so the Orthogenic School in practice offers environmental therapy.

In **Chapter 2 *First encounter***, he stresses the importance of allowing children to enter the school through engaging in its everyday activities rather than in discussions of their problems or emotions; if they do not wish to engage in particular activities, no pressure should be put on them to do so, not least because these may have been battlegrounds in the past. Ideally the child should be able to enter a functioning group whose last newcomer joined some time ago

because children will more quickly trust the reactions of the children around them than any reassurances from adults.

In **Chapter 3 *Events in sequence***, he argues that dealing with children's concerns within the context of their day-to-day activities is far more effective than asking them to talk about them in therapy sessions, but that this process may take many days and many interactions to complete.

In **Chapter 4 *From dreams to waking***, he discusses the process of waking up, particularly if that has been through a dream which some children may not be able to separate from reality (this was written long before our current understanding of REM sleep and dreams), and the importance of making it a gradual process through which they can deal with any anxieties they may have about daytime.

In **Chapter 5 *The in-between times***, he discusses times and places that have no defined character, such as times between activities and spaces between rooms, in which many significant activities take place. These times and places may be more important to children if they have experienced frustration or disappointment around set times and places which a child may take years to get over.

In **Chapter 6 *The challenge of learning***, he discusses fears not just of school but of the process of learning and how these can be allayed/overcome, noting that it may be a long time before the nature of a particular fear comes to be understood. Learning must be a shared experience in which other children can be involved and it can be intimately connected with a child's emotional development.

In **Chapter 7 *Food: the great socializer***, Bettelheim argues that making food freely available avoids the distraction of feelings of hunger in children, makes meal times a social rather than a purely physical event and symbolises emotional care for many children. Where food has been a bargaining tool or children have been more generally deprived, they have to experience it as freely given before they can begin to enter into normal relationships with people. Some may need to eat alone with a member of staff at first because they cannot enjoy a shared meal.

In **Chapter 8 *Rest and play***, he discusses the importance of relaxation as a complement to activity; children who are unable to relax are often unable to engage in normal physical activity. Freedom to act is not always valuable but sometimes only by giving a disturbed child that freedom is it possible to learn what sort of help they really need. Sometimes constructive activity only follows a period of hostile or destructive activity; however, play is essential both to developing as a person and to developing a social network.

In **Chapter 9 *Alone and in the group***, he says that, depending on the child's needs, individual work may be with the person who cares for them on a day-to-day basis or with someone else in the establishment; group work is conducted within the children's daily living groups who are often able to interpret behaviour and provide more acceptable control than if it came from an adult.

In **Chapter 10 *The world outside***, he describes children's reactions to the world outside the school and how these are managed.

In **Chapter 11 *In the bathroom***, he discusses the anxieties and behaviour of children who have difficulties over being clean or dirty or who have been distressed about intimate behaviour or abused in intimate situations.

In **Chapter 12 *Bedtime***, he describes the anxieties children may have about bedtime and how these can be managed through preparatory activities such as bedtime stories and individual work. In particular he considers some children's sexual fears and fantasies and responding throughout the night including to bed-wetting.

## Discussion

Though Bettelheim draws heavily on Freudian ideas, many of his ideas about the interactions between parents and their children would not be out of place in a behaviourist or interactionist textbook. His argument that therapy is best offered in everyday settings rather than in formal interviews or groups is taken up in *The Other 23 Hours* (Trieschman et al., 1969).

*Love is not enough* is not a manifesto for good parenting and, unlike Neill (1962), Bettelheim never tries to draw conclusions about good parenting from his work. He is not concerned with children who have a secure attachment, to use modern parlance, nor with most of those who have an anxious/avoidant or insecure attachment but with a tiny minority whose relationships with adults have become so skewed that they do not know what a normal attachment might be. For these children, because they have no concept of a normal relationship within which the therapy can take place, individual therapy needs to take place as part of individual relationships within a functioning group in which the relationships between their peers will also give them an understanding of what a normal relationship might be like. The idea that children need to develop both individual and group relationships reflects our modern understanding of children's needs (Ladd, 2005) but it was not so in Bettelheim's time, which may be why he makes no claims about its application beyond disturbed children.

In the half century since he wrote, there has been a strong reaction against using group care for such work but the recent evidence that those damaged by abuse may benefit from group work (Sgroi and Sargent, 1993) suggests that this idea may be worth revisiting.

At times his account is burdened by the particular interpretations that he places on what he describes but none of the points he highlights are insignificant in caring for children, and he shares with O'Neill (1981) the view that those working with a child can be baffled by a child's behaviour but still have to continue working with the child in the belief that one day it will change in ways as yet unknown and often unexpected. He also argues that trying to explain a child's behaviour to a child is normally counter-productive because we don't really understand it anyway.

In that context unconditional acceptance serves the two purposes of avoiding replicating actions which the child may see as rejections and allowing the display of the behaviour which may eventually lead to the understanding that workers need in order to help the child more effectively.

In advocating separating children from their parents, though parents are allowed to write, he goes against what would now be regarded as good practice for most children, but his argument that this is necessary when children do not have normal relationships with their parents and need to develop normal relationships before resuming any form of relationship with them may be worth reconsidering in the light of Wiener and Wiener's finding (1990) that the parents who had most harmed their children were often the most resistant to their children receiving appropriate care.

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