

‘mothering acts’ of the working mother. Perhaps, for this reason, the writer noticeably emphasises that she in no way advocates a specific mothering life-style. However, the fact remains that by naming vital mothering acts the book clearly blesses the mother who accommodates, adjusts, creates space, slows pace and surrenders to her baby. Sure, this type of mothering is possible around working hours, but that is a different kind of surrender. Consequently, in these pages stay-at-home mothers in particular find a sense of pride around mothering. Ultimately, Stadlen invites the reader to witness motherly acts. This validates motherly work. It worked for me.

Sanja Oakley

Writing Cures

An Introductory Handbook of Writing in Counselling and Therapy

Edited by Gillie Bolton, Stephanie Howlett, Colin Lago and Jeannie K. Wright. (2005). Brunner Routledge.

Writing Cures is a book about the therapeutic possibilities of the written word, both within and without the context of therapy. The book considers writing in all its forms, from poetry and letter writing to journal-keeping and on-line therapy, and it considers it for clients, for students, for people in distress, for people in change, for therapists, for workers, arguably for all of us. It is a substantial book - “introductory” is arguably something of a misnomer - and overall it is a well-judged brew of example, erudition, and practicality.

The book is in four sections which make a good rough sense of the rather overwhelming 22 chapters. This would be my major criticism of the book, that it is perhaps a little overlong with some repetition. Part 1 - “Theory and Research” - looks at the history and traditions of writing as therapy as well as the more empirical evidence for its utility. Part 2 - “Writing in therapy” - looks at the role of writing in cognitive analytic therapy, in addictions work, in the medical arena, in clinical psychology practice and in mental health work. It develops ideas of writing as a therapeutic endeavour in and of itself, as well as considering its contribution to the process of change by providing clients with something more permanent to which they can refer back. Media covered include journals, diaries, letters (sent and unsent), poems, diagrams, dialogues, set work and free writing. This is the strongest section, ranging from the pragmatic to the profound, and it contains numerous ideas and techniques that could complement or be integrated into a range of approaches to therapeutic work. I also very much liked the quote from Margaret Atwood which concludes Williamson’s chapter on writing in recovery from addiction... “Possibly, then, writing has to do with darkness, and a desire or

perhaps compulsion to enter it, and with luck, to illuminate it, and to bring something back to the light”.

Part 3 - “Writing on-line” - is about e-therapy, ‘the therapeutic relationship in typed text’, and has chapters about on-line therapy, staff counselling, the use of e-mail by the Samaritans and, given the burgeoning nature of this field, a timely chapter on practical and ethical considerations for such work. Part 4 - “Reflective practice” - is another strong section, documenting ideas about writing as a vehicle for supervision and therapist reflection on which journals, letters, free-writing, poetry, therapy-note-keeping and writing-in-groups are all included. Reflective practice is considered from both the perspective of therapist well-being as well as therapy quality and the idea of writing as one way of processing difficult and affecting material is well developed.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, given all its authors are wordsmiths, this book is very well written. Several chapters are outstanding here - Wright’s review of the field (ch. 1), Anthony Ryle’s chapter on the importance of writing in CAT (ch. 6), the chapter by Bolton and Latham on poetry (ch.10) and Heller’s chapter on writing in a reflexive practice group of staff working with people with dementia (ch. 21). One or two chapters are less well-written, the least elegant for me being that on Narrative Therapy. (I should perhaps confess here to generally finding papers on Narrative Therapy hard work and this one I’m afraid was no exception). I also found Steinberg’s chapter on Archetypes a little over-crafted and self-conscious but these are perhaps criticisms on the grounds of style rather than content. Both chapters contained important ideas and I would not have left them out.

I recommend *Writing Cures* to anyone wanting to extend their repertoire of possibilities for clients, as it is an eminently practical book. I recommend it too to anyone thoughtful about words, about language and meaning, as it is also a book about therapy as a philosophical endeavour. I liked it very much.

Dr. Jenny Corless

Forgiveness and the Healing Process

A Central Therapeutic Concern

Cynthia Ransley and Terri Spy (Eds). (2004). East Sussex: Brunner – Routledge.

This nine chapter book on ‘therapeutic forgiveness’ is beautifully researched to answer a mind-bugging question- could there be a missing link in psychological treatment or counselling in meeting client’s needs in some settings? The text is designed to help professionals, clients and