

recognise and distinguish between situations where trauma might be ‘reignited’ and which could potentially have a deleterious effect on a person, and those, by contrast, where it can be helpful and rewarding to engage with existential concerns, which is for many of us, our work.

Another area that creates much disquiet among therapists is working with the suicidal and despairing. I found John Heaton’s down to earth yet profound reflections on these topics, in Chapter 7, refreshing and practical, but not dismissive. He helped me to recognise the unacknowledged despair of everyday living, which for many is not necessarily less profound than that expressed by the parasuicidal. I shifted a notch in reading this chapter and wondered about the distinction between ‘*despair of*’ and ‘*despair from*’ he expounds. Sometimes it is these subtle nuances that can open up rich worlds of new thinking as is the case in ‘*Surviving Intensive Care*’ in which Laura Barnett distinguishes between ‘*survival from death*’ and ‘*survival for life*’.

I have shared a few of my own dialogues with themes in the book; now I hope you shall engage in your own. I have already recommended this book to many therapists and trainees and would recommend the book to any practitioner at any level of experience and of any orientation who wants to be provoked into new thinking about questions of mortality and its different manifestations in the therapy room. And if you are a cynical practitioner who is complacent or indifferent about death and intimations of mortality, I think it even more important that you confront your fear, get stuck in and read this excellent book and dare to resonate with the generous offerings of these committed writers.

Simone Lee

Existential Perspectives on Supervision

Emmy van Deurzen and Sarah Young (Eds). (2009). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sometimes it helps to know where a book reviewer is coming from in order to make sense of what he or she writes: book reviews often say more about the reviewer than the book. So here’s a potted history relevant to my reviewing this book and you reading the review. Briefly, I know little of existential approaches to counselling/psychotherapy/supervision. I know a fair bit about supervision having read, taught and engaged in it from both the supervisor and supervisee’s sides for nearly 30 years. I am not a strong advocate of what is commonly called ‘counselling/psychotherapy-bound-models of supervision’ - where supervision is set up and engaged with in almost the same way as the counselling model is. I think supervision has moved on from allying itself too closely to counselling models and frameworks. Having said that, I am in no doubt about the enormous help

and value brought to supervision from the many philosophical, psychological and counselling orientations that exist. The problem with counselling-bound models of supervision is that they can become narrow, focus too much on the tenets of their own approach and not see supervision in wider contexts of education, learning, facilitation of learning and making sense of how people learn. They can limit freedom rather than widen it and, from my reading of this book, limiting freedom is probably the original sin of existential approaches. So, it was with great interest that I opened this book - and felt privileged to be asked to review it as an existential outsider.

Throughout, the editors and the contributors are at pains to point out that this book is the first of its kind on existential approaches to supervision. I think they are right. They bemoan the fact that while supervision has been central to existential counselling and psychotherapy, it has taken some time for existential supervisors to put pen to paper and begin to share their existential ways of being supervisors with wider audiences. There have been the '*beginnings of an engagement*' (p.150) and also a hesitancy to write because of a sense that existential supervision may well be at variance with some of the commonly held supervisory models and views. The editors describe the book as '*existential supervision being formulated systematically for the first time*' (p.197) and emphasise that they want this first effort to encourage debate, developments and creativity in the field rather than create a standardised form of supervisory practice. The editors rightly point out that '*there are many avenues that need exploring before the territory of existential supervision becomes clearly visible and known. For the moment it will remain a place of adventurous explorations, experimentation and discovery*' (p.202). I'll come back to the creative, adventurous, liberating bit soon, but first the '*limit situations*'.

The book suffers a bit from having a number of chapters that all subscribe to the one orientation (existential approaches) – there is repetition, the same phrases are used by different contributors, the same authors are quoted extensively and the philosophical underpinnings are often reiterated as each author presents his/her material. That is to be expected. As an outsider, I was not put off by this. Quite the opposite, I found it very helpful to be reminded throughout of the essential tenets of existential thinking and theory. I think some repetition is inevitable and comes with the territory. Readers who know this terrain well may feel otherwise. Secondly, a drawback of the book is its attempt to balance 'being' and 'doing'. As you would expect, central to this approach - and indeed to supervision itself- is the supervisory relationship which carries with it our way of being with others, our connectedness and our presence. The book's huge strength is precisely that: its focus on being with others and the quality of the supervisory relationship. My complaint (and I must admit to always wanting more) is what is not here – the practicalities of

being a supervisor: the contracts, the ethical decision making, the evaluation and feedback sides of supervision (always the most difficult task), the types of supervision (peer, individual, small group, teams), organisational aspects of supervision. writing supervisory reports and more: the tasks of supervision, the functions of supervision, effective supervisors and how to help supervisees use supervision to its maximum effect. Occasionally, the impression is given that these actually do not matter much and a good supervisory relationship ('being with') suffices. Some authors do allude to the practicalities of supervision and the contexts in which supervision takes place is looked at and mentioned briefly - though not dealt with in detail. Perhaps that is too much to ask for one book and I look forward to the sequel which translates the theory into the more management or administrative side of supervision - how to set it up, maintain it and deal with the evaluative side. The above might be some of the *'avenues that need exploration before the territory of existential supervision becomes clearly visible and known'* (p.202)

There is a slight tendency for authors to assume that what happens outside existential supervision ignores some or much of what happens within it. Big on testing underlying assumptions, existential supervisors may want to look at their own assumptions about the assumption of other supervisors e.g., that other supervisors take expert roles, are "above" the supervisee, that they correct supervisees, that they are more concerned with doing in supervision rather than being with and for the supervisee. I imagine some do. Many of the supervisors I know from an array of professions and orientations do not see themselves as experts, are not authoritarian, do not only give negative feedback, do not interpret what happens, and don't diagnose for psychopathology. These negative features of poor supervision, and I view supervisors who engage in these activities as poor supervisors. do not disappear with an existential approach to supervision.

I thought the book did itself a disservice by focussing almost exclusively on counselling and psychotherapy supervision. The subtitle of the book is: Widening the Horizon of Psychotherapy and Counselling. The thoughts, ideas and theories here could as easily be applicable to supervision in other areas: life and business coaching, consulting, social work, prison service, probation, nursing etc. While I was reading the book I had a coaching session with a senior executive. The whole session was on how she made meaning of her life and work and how she could be authentic in both.

At this stage of the review you may possibly surmise that I would not recommend this supervision book. Or that I do not find it a valuable contribution to the supervision literature. Bad assumption on your part (see, I'm learning the language). It may come as a surprise to hear that I loved reading it. I read it through from cover to cover with interest, eagerness and enthusiasm almost in one sitting. It gripped me and I

enjoyed learning about the uniqueness of the existential contribution to supervision. And existential perspectives do have a unique contribution to make. There are themes and ideas here that, while not new to supervision history or literature, are presented and re-iterated in a new and refreshing style. I felt good reading the book. Like the man who didn't know he was writing prose until someone explained it to him, I think I have been a closet existential thinker and supervisor without knowing it. I needed this book to remind me of the central values of supervision and not get caught up too much in the administrative and practical aspects that sometimes mean we deal with what is urgent and not always important. This is back to basics stuff in supervision: the centrality of the relationship, the focus on the supervisee, the importance of reflective collaboration and dialogue, the questioning of assumptions for all participants, dealing with "big stuff" of life. Words and phrases used in this book rang memory bells of what should never be forgotten in supervision: evocative supervision, patient philosophical reflection, meditation on work, critical contemplation, collaborative exploration, reflective consciousness, reflective discussion, dialogue, and imaginative variation. And more. While I could recommend many books on the practicalities of supervision, there is none that captures its underlying philosophy as well as this one. It would easily be renamed "A Philosophy of Supervision" where philosophy means the underlying meaning, the heart and essence of, the study of the wisdom of supervision.

The book is divided into three parts each part with an introduction by the editors followed by five chapters in each part. The three parts comprise Theory (the Philosophical foundations of Existential Supervision); Practice (Existential Supervision in Practice) and Challenges (Questioning and Developing Existential Supervision). Strangely enough, if I were reading it again, I would start with the final chapter called "The Future of Existential Supervision" by the editors, Emmy van Deurzen and Sarah Young. Here they capture beautifully the essence of the existential approach and lay down the foundations of the present state of existential supervision with an agenda for the future if it is to make the impact it deserves. All the chapters are worth reading and there were a few that from a wider supervisory viewpoint are quite original e.g., online group supervision, the world of addiction. I have seen nothing in the supervision literature on these two areas that are as creative as these chapters. There is also a helpful Glossary of terms at the end of the book is helpful to those not used to the existential language.

This book is essentially, in my view, about helping supervisors and supervisees find freedom and take freedom to be creative in supervision and to base it on authenticity and realness. It's a clear declaration of moving from supervision as an overcontrolled, over directed, over manualised manufactured structure where the supervisor keeps control and the supervisee is a passive recipient of the wisdom of the supervisor, to a

meeting of real people in real time to reflect deeply on their work. I don't know any supervisor, me included, who doesn't need to be reminded of that. If for nothing else, get the book. If you don't need that reminder, buy it anyway – it's full of supervisory gems.

Michael Carroll

Addiction is a Choice.

Jeffrey A Schaler, (2006). Group West.

Or, perhaps, alternatively, genetically loaded to 'get wasted..?'

(Abel, E.L., 1985).

This is a short, accessible but subversive book of 146 pages, not including a respectable 24 page bibliography, reference list; the book is about existential freedom, choice and addiction. With most contemporary specialists adhering to the concept of the disease model of addiction the concept of '*natural recovery*' has often been neglected, and even regarded as a '*taboo*', (Sobell, et al., 2000). In fact natural recovery, some have claimed, '*suggests that the individual was not addicted in the first place. If one is not able to stop independently, then an addiction is present*', (Chiauzzi & Liljegen, 1993, in Sobell, et al., 2000). As is well known the work of E.M. Jellinek continues to be of influence in the alcohol addiction treatment industry.

The work comprises of thirteen chapters, written in a logical, common sense fashion. Firstly, in chapter one, the book starts by examining the ambiguous evidence that addiction really is a disease expounding the '*credo of the free will model*'. This is developed in chapter two, with '*...it's difficult to classify addiction as either a physical or mental disease. Many human problems may be described metaphorically as diseases*', (Schaler, J.A., 2000, p.18). Thus, the author continues, '*any socially-unacceptable behaviour is likely to be diagnosed as an 'addiction'*'. So we encounter *shopping addiction, computer game addiction and sex addiction*. As Carnes, (1992), has stated, '*.....3-6% of Americans have sex addiction*', as this behaviour activates, '*.... similar brain responses as the use of substances such as alcohol or cocaine*'.

The issue of controlled drug use is explored, by explaining that social recreational users are normally able to maintain a low to moderate use pattern without escalating to dependency, thus users are able to treat themselves. With, '*cocaine users moderate their use of the drug for psychological and social reasons that are important to them....research shows that compulsive destructive use is rare...and controlled use of cocaine is the norm*', (Schaler, J.A., 2000, p.29). He continues that addiction, regardless of drug, is a choice, and we can learn from the '*rat park*' experiments, on the effect of environments in relation to drug use.