Book Reviews

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Daitch, C. (2007). Affect regulation toolbox: Practical and effective hypnotic interventions for the over-reactive client. New York: Norton. Reviewed by Eric K. Willmarth, Ph.D., Saybrook Graduate University Research Center, Grand Rapids, MI. This is the first book written by Carolyn Daitch, Ph.D. and it has already been widely referred to as a “clinical classic.” Dr. Daitch is a licensed psychologist and director of the Center for the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders in Farmington Hills, Michigan. She is the past-president of the Michigan Society of Clinical Hypnosis and an Approved Consultant with the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis. She is a frequent presenter at meetings of the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and at numerous psychotherapy meetings. She is a consultant to the University of Michigan -Program of Integrative Medicine.

The author explains that she conceived of this book after learning from years of clinical experience that “talk therapy alone simply does not provide the immediate relief or the long-term results” needed by some patients. These “over-reactive” patients are described by the author along with their clinical features. Drawing from her experience with psychotherapy and clinical hypnosis, she outlines a number of specific skills and techniques that patients can be taught to help stabilize the emotional shifts which often lead to escalating anxiety. She refers to this collection of techniques as her “Toolbox.”

Affect Regulation Toolbox is comprised of 12 chapters and totals 289 pages. There are three main sections of the book. The first section includes chapters 1-3 and describes the condition and challenges of over-reactivity, the psychophysiology of emotional reactivity and general considerations for using the toolbox, with or without the use of hypnosis. The second section, chapters 4-7 describe four “tiers,” with each tier focusing on a different aspect of therapeutic intervention. Tier 1 requires the recognition of over-reactivity and the initiation of a brief pause or interruption of the reactive process. Tier 2 attempts to focus attention and calm the patient and consists of classic hypnotic induction and deepening techniques. Experienced hypnotherapists will recognize these approaches but clear and useful scripts are provided that will be helpful for the beginner and experienced therapist alike. The first 10 “tools” are introduced in this section. Tools 11-32 are presented in tier 3 and represent the heart of the therapeutic interventions designed to address a wide variety of clinical challenges. Six objectives
are offered which include: 1. Mindfulness, 2. Sensory Awareness and Cues, 3. Impulse Control, 4. Coexisting Affective States, 5. Resource Utilization, and, 6. Positive Affect Development. Full scripts and commentary are provided throughout the chapter, as they are in “Tier 4” which focuses on behavioral practice and rehearsal. Dr. Daitch notes the importance of patients practicing while in the office and while being observed by the therapist, rather than just unobserved homework assignments.

The final section, chapters 8-12, provides more detail and suggestions on how to apply the tools to specific clinical conditions including common and severe anxiety disorders, marital conflict, and a number of relationship problems. This final chapter outlines common pitfalls and challenges in working with the Toolbox. The entire book is filled with clinical tips, case studies, verbatim scripts, and clinical wisdom that could only come from an experienced, working clinician.

The strong points of this book are contained in the subtitle: “Practical and Effective.” While the book is not intended to be a complete guide to clinical hypnosis, the clear advantages of hypnotic intervention are laid out, and it is not difficult to extend the presented tools to a number of areas beyond the anxious or over-reactive patient. Then, too, many of the skills and approaches presented could be adapted to be used without hypnosis at all. For the clinician experienced with hypnotic interventions, this book makes an excellent reference guide to practical hypnotic scripts and applications. For the beginner, there are few better examples of the core hypnotic skills needed in clinical intervention.

In short, this book is well organized, written, referenced, and indexed and will be useful to both beginning therapists and experienced hypnotherapists alike. The book sets a clear standard for clinical guides that are practical in the daily business of psychotherapy and a number of patients will clearly benefit from the tools offered. The book is highly recommended.

Reznick, C. (2009) *The Power of Your Child’s Imagination*. New York: A Pedigree Book. Reviewed by Julie H. Linden, Ph.D., private practice, Philadelphia PA. Every so often a psychology self-help book is published whose title captures one’s attention and whose content captivates one’s mind. *The Power of Your Child’s Imagination* is such a book. Who considers that a child’s imagination is something powerful? Many parents find it gets in the way of attention or is useful only when time needs to be occupied. Intended for parents to use with their children, Dr. Reznick artfully explores and explains the way into a child’s inner world. She brings their imaginative abilities out of just the “playful” and into their rightful place among the most healing and transformative tools available to humans. She sees imagination as about both creating and empowering.

An educational psychologist with training in hypnosis, meditation, guided imagery and various other healing arts, Reznick is associate clinical professor of psychology at UCLA and has created the program “Imagery for Kids: Breakthrough for Learning, Creativity, and Empowerment.” Her voice resounds with hopefulness and energy on the innate abilities of children to find solutions to their everyday challenges. These are abilities waiting to be discovered, unleashed and guided in the company of loving adults. She has integrated years of experience working with children and summarized them into nine basic tools.

It turns out that the tools are not only basic, but that they are the tried and true methods we employ regularly in our hypnotic work. These include diaphragmatic breathing, learning relaxation, finding a safe place, centering and grounding, calling on inner guides, conversing with the body, mobilizing energy and tapping into each of the senses, especially color. These are explained in detail, each receiving a full chapter, with case vignettes to
Reznick has managed to write in a clear, authoritative and simple manner about the very kinds of child rearing issues that parents face daily, e.g., building self-esteem and self-confidence, reducing worry and anxiety, getting rid of tummy aches and headaches, improving sleep, and mastering fears. She knows her audience. She is careful to stay within the familiar roles of parenting and not confuse this work with the roles of clinicians whose techniques may include uncovering, an understanding of dissociation or a more complex understanding of the science behind a behavior or illness. In her discourse, Reznick incorporates some of the newest findings in neuroscience to educate parents about what lies behind some of the “magic” of imagery. It is an exciting notion to think of parents learning the importance of imagination and suggestion to help their children help themselves. And if parents can learn these skills, then how much more exciting for teachers to learn to utilize these same techniques. It is not at all clear, however, just how adept a parent can be at learning these skills, and typically parents need more than a book to guide them in this process. The large numbers of people who go to yoga and meditation classes attest to the need for guidance. Certainly, a published book on the topic is by itself a powerful suggestion that parents and other important adults in the lives of children can avail themselves of these tools. Meanwhile, it is the pediatrician’s and psychologist’s offices that fill with parents seeking help for these daily frontiers in parenting.

Here is where this book becomes so valuable to those in the hypnosis field who work with children. It is quite comprehensive in describing hypnotic techniques to incorporate in our work with children. While it “masquerades” in the less stigmatized clothing of guided imagery, it is so well organized, so full of wisdom and so expert in taking one through each step to help a child, it is an excellent text for the newly initiated to child hypnosis. For the rest of us, it is a book we would all wish we had written about how to use hypnosis with children and one we can recommend to parents so they may learn what it is we do to help their children.

Simeon, D., & Abugel, J. (2006). *Feeling unreal: Depersonalization disorder and the loss of the self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Reviewed by Etzel Cardeña, Ph. D., Thorsen Professor, Lund University, Sweden. At some point all of us may experience ourselves or our surroundings as unreal or dreamlike, perhaps at the time of an important loss, trauma, or ingestion of some psychoactive substance. The experience, however, typically fades away. But what if it did not and we had a persistent sense of estrangement from our own selves? This book addresses that disturbing condition. Daphne Simeon, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, leads one of two research centers in the world doing programmatic research on depersonalization disorder (DPD) (the other one is at King’s College, London), and is a leading expert on the condition. Jeffrey Abugel is an award-winning editor and writer with a long-standing personal interest in depersonalization.

This is a non-technical book that should interest clinicians and researchers interested in the dissociative disorders and, more generally, the experience of the self. It also has some sections specifically geared to people suffering from DPD. At 242 pages, this tome manages to cover the main facets of DPD. It begins with an overview and many first person accounts of various types of DPD, in itself an important contribution, to vanquish the widespread ignorance about the condition even among mental health professionals. The second chapter
is a historical review of early findings and theories of DPD concluding with a list of the phenomenology of the condition which includes a sense of unreality; emotional numbing and absence of body sensations; increased self-observation; alterations in the experiences of the body, time and space; loss of a sense of agency; having the mind empty of thoughts; and, problems focusing and sustaining attention. The reader versed in hypnosis will immediately notice some phenomena that appear spontaneously in hypnosis such as alterations of the body, time, and space that are associated to hypnotic suggestions such as dissociating the sense of control from a bodily action. Although *Feeling Unreal* only refers to hypnosis in its last page to assert that there is no research evaluating the efficacy of hypnosis for DPD, there are many links that relate severe stress and trauma, the dissociative disorders, hypnosis, and hypnotic strategies that can be used to orient the client to time, space, and one’s body (Cardeña, Maldonado, Van der Hart & Spiegel, 2009).

Another chapter discusses diagnostic criteria and methods with clear distinctions between DPD, which is chronic, recurrent, and at least partly independent from other conditions, and depersonalization reactions and symptoms. It is followed by a discussion of recent clinical research on DPD including that which was conducted by Simeon and her group. The reader will get an overview of triggers of the conditions (e.g., severe stress, use of psychedelics), gender distribution, heritability, and co-morbidity with other conditions such as anxiety and obsession. Childhood emotional maltreatment is especially implicated in the condition, rather than chronic sexual or physical early abuse that is more closely related to severe dissociative conditions such as DID (e.g., Putnam, Guroff, Silberman, Barban, & Post, 1986).

Much to the credit of the authors, they venture into other disciplines in a chapter on depersonalization in literature and philosophy, named after the evocative French phrase le coup de vide (the blow of the void). They provide a relevant overview of the works by Sartre and Camus. However, they should perhaps also included Antonin Artaud, whose relentless and merciless analysis of his self remains unmatched in literature (cf. Greene, 1970), and T. S. Elliot’s devastating 1925 poem *Hollow Men* (We are the hollow men. …Shape without form, shade without colour…. [Elliot, 1936]). At a more popular level, Warner (2006) has proposed that the recent interest in zombie films expresses contemporary angst about the hollowness of existence. Certainly in societies where so many inhabitants prefer to live vicariously through twitter messages or the shallow escapades of starlets or TV show contestants this seems an apt conclusion.

Which brings us to the last sections of the book. The chapter dedicated to medical treatment shows how psychopharmacological interventions for DPD consist more of “hit-and-miss” approaches than of actual “cures.” Indeed, what medication could fully grasp *le coup de vide* and the many variations of it described in earlier sections of the book? The psychological treatments endorsed cover various areas (e.g., psychoeducation, grounding techniques, understanding the meaning of symptoms) in a short-term context that, in my mind, follow more the economic strictures of the US health care than a realistic consideration of a condition that may require a long journey to achieve a worthwhile, meaningful existence. I find it amazing, though, that neither Simeon’s nor the London group, as far as I can tell, have researched mind-body techniques to enhance awareness and integration of body sensations and actions such as Feldenkrais and yoga, considering that so many DPD sufferers report a disconnection between their phenomenal selves and their bodies. I believe this neglect says more about professional than clinical disconnections. The book concludes with an epilogue and a question-and-answer section that reiterates some aspects covered previously.

Although there have been previous publications dealing with different forms of
discontinuities of the experience of the self (e.g., Gabbard, Twemlow, & Jones, 1992), this is
the first volume solely devoted to clinical depersonalization. The book is engagingly written
and I appreciated the links to other disciplines. There is also virtually no discussion of DPD
in non-industrialized societies (see Kirmayer 1994; Van Duijl, Cardeña & De Jong, 2005), nor
of the extraordinary discussion of the phenomenology and psychodynamics of self-
estrangement by R. D. Laing (e.g., 1976). All in all, though, Feeling Unreal makes DPD a lot
more real and is a welcome contribution to an area that even within the dissociative disorders
has received scant attention.

References
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Low, Psy.D., The Center for Conscious Living, Naperville IL.  Michael Yapko is a clinical
psychologist known for his effective merging of cognitive-behavioral methods with clinical
hypnosis in working with depression. He is the author of several previous books and
Teaches therapeutic skills to professionals internationally. Yapko believes in brief, effective
interventions that focus on skill-building. In this spirit his website offers a variety of self-
help materials to supplement his writings.

Yapko’s latest book notes several things that have been obvious to clinicians for
years but have not yet embedded themselves in mainstream thinking about depression.
Clearly, the diagnosis of depression is on the upswing and more, and supposedly better
drugs, are not stopping the trend. Secondly, depression is largely a social issue. Looking at
depression through a social learning model, Yapko demonstrates how moods are contagious
in today’s larger social setting, as well as in the family. The good news here is that if
depressive behaviors and coping styles are learned they can be replaced with better methods
for dealing with one’s life. Drugs may or may not suppress symptoms but they will not
substitute for learning life skills. Yapko does not shy away from the idea of depression as a
chemical imbalance but reminds the reader that all human behavior is a biochemical event.

With a few sections devoted to understanding the internal landscape of depression:
cognitive distortions, internal focus, rigid, ruminative, or negative thinking, anhedonia; the primary focus of the book is about the social aspects of depression. It has long been known that the presence of supportive relationships is a preventative factor for depression. It is also the case that how one perceives others and interacts with them when depressed greatly affects the potential to alter one’s mood for the better. Detailed guides are provided in this book for learning to take responsibility for one’s behavior, maintaining appropriate expectations of others, creating and keeping social support, and avoiding the loss of close relationships when one is depressed. Each segment is replete with illustrative vignettes, thought exercises, and activities to engage the reader in the process of self-help. A final section offers advice to avoid passing depression on to the next generation.

This book is full of valuable and great ideas. Dr. Yapko offers the reader the exciting possibility of regaining control over his or her moods rather than remaining at the mercy of medications. Perhaps the only weakness here is the very wealth of material. It is more of a year-long course on how to regain euphoria than a simple self-help text. Assuming the reader has a therapist to guide the process or chooses to purchase other interactive materials from Dr. Yapko, and has patience for reading, observing, and practicing, this book has an enormous amount to offer. The overall message here is a good one—do something. Our society has for too long encouraged dependency, rather than self-efficacy, when we are not well. From a headache to a cold to a depressed mood we expect others to do something to us to solve it. Books such as this are a move in the right direction—taking responsibility and acting to make positive changes.