



## REVIEWS

**Shelley Green, Reviews Editor**

Lowenstein, L. (Ed.). (2010). *Creative family therapy techniques: Play, art, and expressive activities to engage children in family sessions*. Toronto, Canada: Champion Press, 313 pp., \$35.00.

I once met with a therapy intern who was pale with anxiety about working with children. She peppered me with her questions: “I don’t know what to do with them! How am I being therapeutic if I am playing with them? Won’t the parents think I’m a joke? What should I do?” Naturally, I asked her to play a game of Connect Four, during which we both realized that she had no opportunity to engage in play as a young girl, and she had no way to understand it.

I wish this book had appeared earlier, along with the concise foundation outlined in Napier’s foreword:

The truth is that many therapists were parentified kids in their families of origin. We learned to be rational and verbal and to rise above the muck of our families’ troubles because they needed us to. Truth is, we may be a little afraid of kids; we tried to get over being kids, and we aren’t sure we want to descend to that level again. . . . We get the logic of working with the family; but what can we do about our anxiety? (p. xx)

Lowenstein’s book is a useful and comforting guide for clinicians not yet at ease in working with children.

Section One, Engagement and Assessment Techniques, focuses on the initial phase between therapist and family, assessing problem formation and “the family’s ability to organize and manage itself as it accomplishes tasks, as well as the family’s ability to problem-solve and resolve conflict” (p. 2). This section consists of 22 techniques.

Section Two, Treatment Techniques, focuses on the phase when the therapist assists the client in identifying and meeting therapeutic goals, collaborating “to develop skills and reinforce changes [in the family system] until they are a part of the family’s patterns” (p. 82). This section presents 61 techniques.

Section Three proceeds from the tenet that “termination from therapy is the culmination of the process and products of all that has gone on in prior sessions” (p. 288) and it is therefore often the most difficult part of the therapist-family relationship. In contrast to the almost exhaustive first two sections, only five techniques are presented here. However, Lowenstein seems to be emphasizing that if all aspects of family therapy are facilitated appropriately and effectively, there is little reason to delay the family’s launch into more positive interactions. The process, rather than the techniques, should be the actual focus (p. xxxv). The techniques are useful tools in highlighting the family’s existing strengths, which they may not have been able to develop before therapy. Revisiting those strengths, both newfound and newly identified, may be all that is needed.

Alternatives to talk therapy are important, especially when working with children. It is equally important to note that “for family members to feel comfortable participating in play or art activities, they must know that ‘they are in the presence of a therapist who is comfortable with playing’” (Revell, 1997, as cited in Lowenstein, 2010, p. xxxii).

A must-have for your clinical library, *Creative Family Therapy Techniques* is a practical resource for therapists with various levels of experience and expertise. This book provides a plethora of straightforward activities that practitioners can refer to for constructive and expressive ideas that will inspire the entire family to participate in therapy. While this book does not analyze the theoretical underpinnings of family therapy, it does provide a user-friendly guide

for helping any clinician, from the novice to the seasoned, overcome trepidation about working with children in family sessions.

Charmaine S. Borda, PhD, LMFT, LMHC  
Clinical Director, The Blue Couch, Inc., Plantation, FL

Giles, J. (2008). *The nature of sexual desire*. New York: University Press of America, 188 pp., \$31.95.

This book attempts to provide an understanding of the nature of sexual desire. Giles takes an intercultural and interdisciplinary approach—drawing on theory and research from such disciplines as philosophy, psychology, history, and biology. In his inquiries, he employs a blend of Buddhist and Taoist philosophy, early Greek thought, psychoanalytic inquiry, and existentialism in crafting his phenomenological descriptions. He concludes with an exploration of the impact of gender and romantic love on sexual desire.

Giles is a fine writer. He has an ability to present diverse perspectives in a clear way and to illustrate them with charming and apt metaphors. In making his points, he is as likely to cite lines from the Indian erotic poem *Smaradipika* (Light of Love) as to quote Spinoza, Descartes, Hobbes, or the Rolling Stones. Basically, he takes a phenomenological approach, which was initially expounded by such early philosophers as Dogen (the medieval Japanese Zen master who argued that only through the observation of the “flow of life” can we come to know the nature of reality) and the 19th–20th-century German philosopher Edmund Husserl.

I suspect Giles’s text is the opening salvo in a barrage of books taking a “positive psychology” or sex positive approach to sexuality. In the past, many marriage and family texts focused on sexual problems, the dangers of casual sex, STIs, AIDs, sexual dysfunction, and the like. Giles is instinctively optimistic and thus gives a balanced review of the nature of sexual desire—the joys as well as the pitfalls of passionate love and sexual desire. He is never judgmental and allows for the variability of human desire. He points out, for example, that sexual desire is a decisive feature of human existence. The essence of sexual desire, he argues, is a desire for mutual vulnerability and the care of gendered bodies.

My one quibble is I wish he had stated his own opinion (in the introductory chapters) a bit more forcefully on some of these thorny issues: What is desire? How tightly linked are love and sexual desire? I needed a bit of guidance as to where the text was going. Nonetheless, this remains a provocative and thought-provoking book. It is relevant to the work of marital and family therapists in two important ways: It provides a broad philosophical perspective when confronting issues of human sexuality. It also provides a comprehensive (and quick) history of previous theoretical approaches to the nature of sexual desire. (There are chapters devoted to the theorizing of Ellis, Freud, Reich, Masters, and Johnson, as well as more recent theorists.)

All in all it is a pleasure to read.

Dr. Elaine Hatfield  
Honolulu, HI

Moffatt, G. K. (2010). *Survivors: What we can learn from how they cope with horrific tragedy*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 221 pp., \$44.95.

This book is a refreshing and timely approach to treating trauma, in which the resiliency and internal strength of survivors are recognized, explored, and celebrated. Moffatt has worked as a clinician and researcher studying aggressive behavior and violent death for over 20 years, and this contribution comes out of his continued observation and admiration of resiliency. The