

BOOK REVIEW

Family, Self, and Psychotherapy: A Person-Centered Perspective

Gaylin, Ned L.

Herefordshire, UK: PCCS Books (2001)

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What a pleasure to read this beautifully written and edited volume of previously published articles, presented papers, as well as revised and exclusive chapters written by Ned L. Gaylin. The author waltzes personally and academically through key areas of Person-Centered family therapy and being. He argues with intellect and passion about his struggles, his thoughts, his feelings, his existence as a genuine person-centered family member, academic, clinician, and human being.

The author begins his volume by treating the reader to a short preface that maps the book and introduces himself, his family, and his career. An introduction followed that outlined an historical and contextual progression in the unfolding of his Person-Centered Approach to family therapy. In it, he described his struggle to integrate person-centered philosophy with what he valued in family therapy (independence versus the interdependent human condition that can offer "...maximized potential for positive and lasting change" (p. vi).

In the first four chapters the author discusses his thoughts and feelings about the family and it's importance to human being. Chapter One includes a moving discussion on the positive experience of life and death. This chapter is t=rich with poignant, personal accounts of the author's family experiences. Chapter Two is an overview of the family under pressure from the "...ideologies, values, and priorities of the society...awry" (p. 23). Contrary to the notion that the family is inadequate, the author suggests that it is society, not the family, that is best the focus of critical scrutiny. In Chapter Three marriage is discussed with respect to history, love and trust, strain and divorce, and as a foundation of civilization. The author discusses family development and cultural context in Chapter Four, integrating the centrality of our mutual interdependence as humans.

Chapters Five and Six explore the foundations of the Person-Centered Approach relevant to the development of the self, it's implications in the psychotherapeutic process, and creativeness and well-being. Chapters 7-12 focus on discussions of therapy principles and methods including morals, actualizing tendencies, emergence of self, necessary and sufficient conditions, family therapy process; ghosting. Intergenerational echoing, and working with children. In the final chapter to the book (Chapter 13) traditional (normative) approaches to behavioral science are discussed and alternative (ipsative) approaches are explored. It is here the author returns the reader to a personal and positive Person-Centered Approach in therapy, research and being.

I find this book to be an informative, challenging, and moving mix of academic and personal pieces addressing critical issues in the person-centered approach to family and individual therapy. I recommend it as a read not to be missed for those practicing, learning, or teaching a Person-Centered approach (or any other approaches) to family therapy.

Reviewed by:
Leslie A. McCulloch

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