BOOK REVIEWS

Treating Families of Brain-Injury Survivors


As the title implies, this book was written for professionals working with survivors of head injury and their families. The focus is on general principles of psychological assessment and treatment of the family members. Although this book was written primarily for psychologists, occupational therapists involved in the rehabilitation of persons with head injury would be very comfortable with its content.

The first chapter, Overview of Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation and its Implications for the Family, provides information on the epidemiology as well as the medical, physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral sequelae and the significance for family members. The overview includes a description of a range of treatment settings and the family's emotional adjustments during the phases of rehabilitation.

The chapter entitled Family System and Traumatic Brain Injury describes the structure of a well-functioning family in relation to the effect of the traumatic brain injury. This information is crucial to the examination of the multidimensional effect of the problem on the family. Parents, spouses, and children are differentiated in terms of their relationship with the brain-injury survivor. This chapter may be especially helpful to rehabilitation professionals who wish to develop a solid appreciation of the surviving family's issues.

The chapters entitled Assessment of the Family and Psychological Treatment Techniques are indirectly related to the practice of occupational therapy. The principles presented in these chapters are supported and clarified by descriptions of individual circumstances and case examples. Occupational therapists on a rehabilitation team would appreciate the advice about engaging families in the treatment process, resolving practical problems, and working with noncompliant families.

In the chapter entitled Special Treatment Issues, the psychological treatment needs of parents, spouses, and children are identified as they relate to the rehabilitation of their family member with a traumatic brain injury. This chapter expands on treatment interventions for specific problems that a survivor may have in a rehabilitation facility. Problems of behavior control, sexuality, denial, and discharge planning are discussed in terms of an appropriate approach to take with families. Specific treatment techniques to use with the survivor are not described. Although this information would have been clinically relevant for occupational therapists, it is beyond the scope of this book.

The chapter entitled The Family Self-Help Movement examines this movement's effect on the psychological adjustment and treatment of surviving families. The importance of these self-help groups as they influence political, clinical, and research trends are briefly described.

A chapter entitled Emotional Impact of Family Treatment on the Professional examines the common emotional reactions of denial, anger, and exhaustion. Many clinicians will be able to identify with the emotional experiences described and their importance to professional roles.

This book is clearly and respectfully written and exceptionally organized. Personal testimonials of family members of survivors of traumatic brain injury are interspersed between the chapters of the book. Occupational therapists who want to learn more about family-centered services would appreciate this book.

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Therapeutic Use of Touch: A Treatment Guide for the Health-Care Professional


This is a fascinating book that links traditional neurophysiological theory with Eastern philosophies and techniques by examining touch in an innovative way. The author encourages the reader to "keep an open mind" while reading this book and to "be prepared to make some changes...in the way you use touch in your health-care facility" (p. xi).

The book consists of six chapters, the first of which provides a historical overview of the healing power of touch, including the powerful mind-body connection and the importance of touch in normal development, from fetal stages through the geriatric years. A discussion of the anatomy and physiology of the skin and sensory receptors provides an excellent foundation for the section on types of touch and therapeutic techniques found in this and later chapters. This introductory chapter, in particular, is worthwhile reading for most health care professionals, because it incites thought about the use of touch in one's own practice.

Chapter 2 begins to link Western and Eastern philosophies. This chapter looks specifically at body mapping from each cultural vantage point. Western interpretations include a review of dermatome mapping and somatotopic organization of the cerebral cortex. Eastern interpretations, such as acupoint mapping of the ear, may not be as familiar to the reader, and the more skeptical reader may become disinterested. However, the author develops the connection between Eastern and Western interpretations in his clear, easy-to-follow writing and includes a discussion of supportive scientific literature, relevant personal anecdotes, and excellent diagrams, with the result being fascinating reading.

Chapter 3 reviews the mechanisms behind therapeutic touch in great detail. Influences of touch on many body systems is examined, including the nervous, circulatory, and lymphatic systems. This section also looks at principles of heat and energy transfer and how this relates to therapeutic touch. A fair portion of this discussion is focused at the cellular level and may not appeal to all readers.

Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to practical therapeutic procedures. Techniques that may be more familiar to the reader, such as postures and breathing exercises, are described in conjunction with innovative movements and therapeutic touch techniques. Less familiar