

Keys to Parenting Your Anxious Child

Katharina Manassis. Barron's Educational Series, Inc.: Hauppauge, NY, 2008. 192 pages. \$8.99 (US), softcover.



As part of Barron's Educational Series, *Keys to Parenting Your Anxious Child* is a wonderful addition to an extensive list of guides on matters ranging from exam preparation to college curricula. In this second edition, Dr. Katharina Manassis, Psychiatrist and Director of the Anxiety Disorders Clinic at the Hospital for Sick Children, as well as Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, explains the skills needed for parenting an anxious child. The text is elaborated with parents in mind, and it certainly focuses on their needs and questions, whether the child's anxiety is mild, moderate, or extreme. The patient population discussed is anxious children aged 7 to 12, but the principles remain informative beyond this age range.

Each of the 35 short chapters, or "keys," is of remarkable depth. Akin to variations on a theme, their style is rich and inventive. While each can suffice in addressing a specific facet of childhood anxiety, readers are encouraged to be flexible and open to different approaches. This is helped by the ample internal references, making the work very coherent. At times, these may be more numerous than needed.

The author introduces the topic of anxiety fluently. After commenting on prevalence and etiology, she emphasizes the importance of desensitization, thereby stating the unifying theme of the book: anxiety is severe when it interferes with age-appropriate activities, and the most effective treatment consists in the child facing the situations that trigger it.

The second part of this book is centered on an illustrative figure, in which anxiety is conceptualized as resulting from an interaction of stressor(s) with innate vulnerability that can be offset by an affected child's coping skills and support. The two sides of this equation are fully explored, yielding a rich series of "keys." Dr. Manassis encourages parents to use incentives, time charts, and attention to subtle change in the effort to shift the balance away from anxiety. She then brilliantly addresses the notion of medication use, helping

parents understand the full spectrum of anxiety treatments in clear and accessible terms.

In the third section of the book, the author touches upon specific areas of impairment, such as school refusal, unassertiveness, and perfectionism. Vivid examples help to apply the methods previously listed. One leaves this series of "keys" with an understanding of the breadth of anxiety and the need to be consistently supportive, all the while recognizing the child's strengths and ability to improve.

The final section illustrates the complex interactions between the anxious child and his or her surroundings, for instance family, friends, the community, or health care professionals. Parents are reminded that they are the "conductor," and that their efforts to support the child will yield the best outcomes only if these are exerted in harmony with all entities.

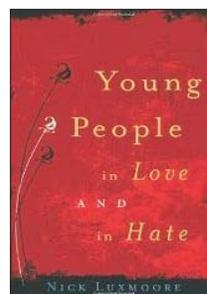
Keys to Parenting Your Anxious Child offers a comprehensive view on pediatric anxiety issues and gives parents a realistic and poignant perspective of the child's experience. It should be particularly useful for parents who want to play an active role as part of a team helping a child who is anxious, as well as for those living in under-served areas.

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Young People in Love and in Hate

Nick Luxmoore. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London, UK, 2010. 143 pages. £11.99 (UK), softcover.



In this book (his fourth), the author uses his years of experience as a therapist and school counselor to explore the meaning of love and hate in the world of adolescents and people in their early twenties. It is short, written in easy colloquial language, and full of enjoyable vignettes from

counseling sessions and other encounters with young people. He offers a thoughtful and insightful look into the psychology of young relationships, and glimpses into his therapeutic counseling technique.

He uses clear concepts from attachment theory, object relations theory, and self psychology throughout the book. The brief quotes from Winnicott, Klein, Bowlby, Kernberg, and Fairbairn, and those from more contemporary thinkers like Eigen, Alford, and Fonagy, are made simple and understandable, and are applied to the clinical vignettes.

The book is organized in five chapters: an Introduction, Young People in Love, Young People in Hate, Making up, and Breaking up. Love is examined as a way of practicing trust, seeking proof of its existence, testing the reality of romantic promises and rumours, seeking a way to talk to parents and as a way of understanding shame, privacy, aloneness and loss. Hate is examined in connection with evil, mothering, dependency, envy and counter-transference.

Although this is not a guide on how to counsel or provide therapy to young people, the author's examples of his work provide a vivid picture of the respect, patience and curiosity essential for any form of therapy. This book will prove highly useful for beginning therapists so they can learn about therapeutic stance.

The vignettes contain keen observations and reflections on which therapeutic interventions work and which ones do not. The author writes with candid transparency about his own counter-transference.

The back cover review offers the book to professionals and parents, nevertheless it is doubtful that parents will find it useful. Most parents are not therapists, and the lay reader may be shocked or even outraged at the accepting, non-critical position of the author. The book may help parents understand the psychology of their teenagers, yet it is not a practical guide to improving parent-adolescent relationships.

The author's goal in counseling (at times indistinguishable from psychodynamic psychotherapy) is to move the young person toward a place of tolerating uncertainty and ordinary love. He guides the reader through the phases of his therapeutic relationships. In the end, the reader shares with the writer the same degree of hope and uncertainty for his patients.

Perhaps the only flaw in the book is that it does not contain vignettes of cases in which the therapy relationship has not ended well.

Overall, the author offers a well-written, refreshing look at the psychology of love and hate as important features in a young person's development. It is a good addition to the shelf of novice and experienced professionals. As the youth of the world changes, re-reading this book will offer a glance at our cultural evolution.

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How to Talk to Parents about Autism

Roy Q. Sanders. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company; 2008. 256 pages. \$26.50, softcover.



This is a most unique and valuable book, written by the father of a boy with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who is also a psychiatrist who has advised others about this disorder. Experience from both sides of the gurney make this book particularly helpful. It is divided into a number of well chosen sections, and the chapters follow a formula, beginning with a description of the particular area of interest, followed by answers to questions parents frequently ask, and finally Dr. Saunders' descriptions of his own experience with the matter at hand. In this way, he adroitly manages to deal with the questions that most concern parents, models the skills necessary for the professional who is advising them, and gives practical examples of situations as he experienced them as a parent. While books about the subject matter of autism are common, practical advice on the role of the professional as advisor, with its demands, is much harder to find, and one of the subjects that is not often discussed in formal medical education. Professionals and parents will benefit from his expertise.

The book begins with the initial visit when the diagnosis of an ASD is made. It then goes on to describe the benefits and limitations of diagnostic labels, which I know, in my experience, are often a concern of parents. Dr. Sanders emphasizes the importance of the affected family's relationships, including friends, relatives, other parents, and members of the community. Often, the greatest difficulties for families dealing with a serious mental illness are created by the isolation they experience, engendered by fear and guilt.

Co-morbidities in the child with an ASD are dealt with next; intellectual disability, in particular, is often seen as even more stigmatizing than the ASD itself. Co-morbid sensory integration problems, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, tics, mood disorders, and anxiety disorders are reviewed, and the unique ways in which they present in this population are well covered. Specific areas of special concern, such as language delays, deficient social skills, repetitive behaviours and special interests are discussed. Tantrums, and the critical importance of dealing with them early in development are particularly well addressed. Family stressors, caused by the patient's sleep disorders, toileting deficits, and dietary peculiarities are each dealt with in a practical and comprehensive way, with the professional aspects balanced by the author's personal experience.

The topic of treatments for ASD is particularly well handled, including the place of alternative treatments. Family stress and ways of handling it are discussed at length, including the importance of rest, support, therapy and honesty. The discussion of the typical "division of labour" that results in one parent (often the mother) becoming the caregiver, and the other the breadwinner, is particularly to the point. The author points out that the resulting polarization of the parents can lead to extreme caregiving pressure for one and isolation for the other unless a concerted effort is made to divide the work of parenting equitably.

Dr. Sanders' description of reacting as a "professional parent" with the feeling that he had to "fix everything" was also apt and I could definitely identify with his dilemma. The potential role of extended family and siblings, and the associated benefits and pitfalls are well covered.

Finally, the book reviews the developmental stages that the child and family affected by ASD experience, outlining the challenges that mark each school level. Warnings against procrastination, isolation and denial are clearly yet sympathetically spelled out. While the issues of wills and guardianship are painful to broach, as is usually the case, Dr.

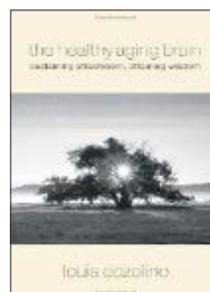
Sanders makes the case that the only way to truly relieve the pressure that the family is experiencing is to meet this issue head on.

The book has few shortcomings; repetition is common, but serves to emphasize important points and allows the sections to stand alone. The writer is from the United States, so some legal and political comments are not germane to the situation in Canada. These are small matters when compared to the unique and rich perspective this volume brings to its readers.

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The Healthy Aging Brain: Sustaining Attachment, Attaining Wisdom

Louis Cozolino. *W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, 2008.*
380 pages. \$29.95 (US), hardcover.



This is the third book by Louis Cozolino that I have had the privilege to read and review. Each is golden in its own way and focuses on a different aspect of human brain development and function. The first book was on the neuroscience of relationships, the second was on the neuroscience of psychotherapy, and now this one is on the healthy aging brain.

I am at an age where aging is an issue. With my family history of Alzheimer's comes a desire to avoid that disease myself, to keep my wits and live my life to the fullest. We now know more than ever about the function of the brain and many of our past beliefs have proven to be inaccurate. This is an optimistic book. Dr. Cozolino writes that the brain is more plastic than has been thought before, and it continues to grow and change throughout our lives. Although this is not a "how to" book, there are some things described on these pages about what we can do to facilitate the continued health of our brains and avoid cognitive deterioration. The bottom line is that our brain is social, so that all we can do to support social functioning is worthwhile and facilitates brain adaptation and change. Some aspects of brain function inevitably decline, while others stay the same or improve with age. We now

know that neurons continue to grow throughout life, particularly in the frontal lobes and its interconnections. A rule of thumb posited in this book is that the more complexity in one's life, the better the function of one's brain.

This book is divided into four sections with fourteen chapters. The first section reviews the growth of the brain and its grounding in social interaction. In the second section, Cozolino gives an overview of the social aspects of brain development across the life span reviewing current theories of the aging brain and neuroplasticity. In the third section, there is a fascinating discussion of the attainment and growth of wisdom that has usually been associated with aging. In the four chapters of this section, the author explicates insight, self-awareness and compassion to inform our understanding of the life history of the brain and the factors that support the emergence of wisdom—a function which is often hard to define. His list of ten wise people chosen by undergrads is fascinating, ranging from Ghandi to Oprah Winfrey. The author goes on to set out the attributes of wisdom, defined as getting to know and to be comfortable with oneself, having good judgement, giving to others and living life to the fullest.

Although this is not specifically a “how to” book, in the fourth section Cozolino writes about the ways in which one can care for oneself as one ages, nurturing the body and relationships, giving an importance to grand-parenting, challenging oneself, and living life to the fullest extent that one can. He suggests that it is important to review one's life, constructing stories that speak to losses that one must face as one gets older, with the integration of what one has accomplished in life.

In the appendix, Dr. Cozolino provides a list of fifty-two things that one can do to stay vital—all good suggestions, and full of wisdom.

I appreciated Dr. Cozolino's two previous books and I would recommend this book as well; not only to understand the brain and how it functions, but also because of the wisdom contained in it. We all are living longer and it is to everyone's advantage to live life to the fullest, to enjoy life and to share it with others.

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