

not skimp on the basics, and for veteran therapists this might make some parts feel a little redundant. However, this also makes the manual suitable for a broad range of users, and it would be a helpful resource for anyone planning, running or supervising a managing anger treatment programme for people who have cognitive impairment.

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Overcoming Problem Drinking

Maracantonio Spada

London: Constable and Robinson, 2006. pp. 256. £9.99 (pb). ISBN: 1-84529-112-3.
doi:10.1017/S1352465807003876

This is a useful and highly recommended self-help series and *Overcoming Problem Drinking* is an invaluable addition. Self-help sceptics will be pleased to note that there is an empathic preface that allows the reader to relate to the author as the therapist who has written the words and thus contribute to a notion of engagement. Spada is also realistic about whom the book will help and acknowledges very early on that the help of a CBT therapist may be needed, depending on the level of the problem.

The book demonstrates a very clear process of identifying and measuring the problem in behavioural theory terms, emphasizing the short-term positive reinforcement of feelings of pleasure and the negative reinforcement through numbing of emotions. It takes the reader through methods for enhancing motivation and then on to a model for intervention. It is a CBT course designer's dream in demonstrating how to structure and follow through a logical treatment plan. It moves on to look at challenging uncontrollability thoughts and permissive thoughts about drinking; tackling cravings; focusing on key skills such as assertiveness in assisting to refuse drinks, and lifestyle changes to increase pleasurable activities to deal with depression and to offer positive alternatives to drinking. The summaries at the end of each chapter are extremely helpful memory aids and can be recapped easily. It recognizes the financial, social, emotional and health impact of a drinking problem and offers useful chapters and contacts to deal with a whole range of secondary problems.

The stages of change summary I found particularly useful and I admit I have lifted this chapter to use in other situations where it is necessary to convey this theory clearly and concisely. The author acknowledges that people may like to dip in and out of the book according to the order in which it is relevant to them. For me, the enhancing motivation to change exercises were very useful but I would have preferred the goals last in the process to aid clarity. I also found that the "vicious cycles" that typify the maintenance of a drinking problem would have been easier to follow if simplified somewhat and shown as circles rather than boxes.

As with any self-help book, the proof is in the road testing. I became abstinent from alcohol for two weeks on the grounds that one should try out what one recommends and it helped me to challenge my beliefs about the necessity of a glass of wine to unwind and I found more time to spend in a pilates class. One person I recommended it to with a recognized problem doubted his ability to use it unaided because he was slightly intimidated by the science of it all. Spada acknowledges that it would be "awesome" if the book alone precipitated lasting

change. However, as an adjunct to minimal therapist intervention and support it has proven very successful in my extremely limited trial with three patients.

I found the A-T-E-B-C analysis particularly clear and useful, but I am not about to attempt to explain this acronym – you must buy the book, which is an essential addition to a bookshelf and a bargain at RRP £9.99.

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