

Overall, I still feel the author would have been better to dispense with the appearance of a marbled tome and to offer more of an overview of more recent papers. I was glad to have had the opportunity to review the book, but am not sure that personally I would have parted with the money it cost. However, a copy for a library or department would not go amiss.

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Surviving Secrets. By MOIRA WALKER. 1993. Buckingham: Open University Press. 211 pp. £35.00 (h.b.), £11.99 (p.b.).

This book draws heavily upon interviews that the author has had with abuse survivors. A substantial proportion of the text is from the material presented in therapeutic sessions, used to illustrate various aspects of a wide variety of abusive experience, be they physical, sexual or emotional.

The text starts by giving a relatively brief introduction to the concepts of different types of abuse, highlighting some now well established facts, for example the inter-generational aspects of many forms of abuse. The second chapter concentrates on direct experiences of five particular people, as they have presented them to the author. As the author herself points out, their own words do demonstrate powerfully the nature of the abuse that they have been subjected to, and anybody who has not had previous experience in communicating with either children or adults who have been abused will find this chapter illuminating, and, at times, harrowing.

The book then moves on to try and consider the abusive experience, as the adults reflect back on their childhood, and then more latterly how it has affected their functioning in adult life. Many of the aspects that are known to be affected, for example one's ability to form stable, long-term relationships with partners, are exemplified by several quotes: a woman in her 30s, again abused by both her parents, was criss-crossed with scars all over her body from where she had constantly cut herself – "I am a lesbian, and I feel this is a result of the abuse." "All my relationships with women have failed, when I get close my possessiveness is indescribably great." "A relationship with a man is unthinkable." "Being in the same room as a man is only just tolerable."

The author then considers, in much more detail, the concept of the development of multiple personality disorder, and this includes some intriguing case studies. The closing chapters of the book concentrate on the stages in the process of counselling and therapy, and particular issues that are raised, for the survivor of the abuse, but also the therapist. For trainee professionals embarking upon this sort of counselling, these chapters provide a useful starting point.

Over and above these clinical and therapeutic considerations, it is noted that many of these individuals may well remain unidentified and unable to have access to therapeutic help, if this should be required. The author points out that, from her sample, few people found the help of psychiatrists at all useful. This remains unsubstantiated and, considering the resource implications that Moira Walker is raising, it would be interesting to pursue this consideration further. This is a useful text for those wishing to try and help this needy group of adults, who have survived some horrendous experiences throughout their childhood and adolescence.

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Pseudo-Epileptic Seizures. Edited by L. GRAM, S. I. JOHANNESSEN, P. O. OSTERMAN and M. SILLANPÄÄ. 1993. Petersfield: Wrightson Biomedical Publishing. 165 pp. £27.00.

The editors of this interesting and timely book begin in the preface with startling semantic muddles. They note that pseudoseizures may have several pathophysiological mechanisms that underlie them, and go on to state: "Pseudo-epileptic seizures, or whatever expression may be used for them, are not manifestations of disordered activity of the brain, but of a complicated psychopathological background." In medicine it is usual to be more precise in terminology (an editor of a book on multiple sclerosis would not say "multiple sclerosis or whatever you want to call it"), and the second part of the sentence reveals a Cartesian error of astonishing proportions. The dilemma is put succinctly by Sahlhold, thus: "Pseudo-epileptic seizures are neither pseudo nor epileptic – they seem to be epileptic, but they are not; they are called pseudo, but they are real."

There are no clear solutions to be found to these problems here, the book being concerned largely with clinical aspects of the problem, with a good emphasis being placed on management. The authors' use of the word pseudo-epileptic for the seizures under consideration in this book seems logical, but nowhere receives justification.

The magnitude of the clinical problem is reinforced throughout the book, with figures ranging from 10–28% of patients coming to epilepsy clinics or in the community with non-epileptic attacks. The difficulties in making the diagnosis are repeatedly noted, and the differential diagnosis is well covered. There are chapters devoted to important specific subjects such as children, aggression and rage, Munchausen's syndrome and sexual abuse. Further, psychological models are reviewed from the psychodynamic to the stress-related paradigms.

This is a useful practical book, and will be of value to all of those involved in the diagnosis and management of patients with these seizure types. A further book is

needed, however, to help sort out the ambiguities of the preface.

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My Mum Needs Me – Helping Children with Ill or Disabled Parents. By JULIA SEGAL and JOHN SIMKINS. 1993. London: Penguin Books. 253 pp. £6.99.

This Penguin paperback is written by two psychotherapeutically orientated counsellors who have worked for many years with children and families who suffer from multiple sclerosis (MS), and other debilitating, potentially fatal illnesses. Their wealth of knowledge of the difficulties these families face permeates each page. Their insights into children's feelings and thoughts when faced with calamity, chronic illness or loss are relevant not only to MS sufferers; they are applicable to children coping with chronic psychiatric disorder, non-fatal but frightening or bewildering illness in parents, and even the loss in other situations such as divorce.

The book is written for lay persons and parents as well as professional counsellors. It is divided into two parts: the first part describes some of the issues and difficulties – such as loss and change, dependence, separation and independence, aggression and control – with a wealth of casework illustrative material; the second part suggests ways that parents, adult friends, teachers and other professionals may help children through talking and play, as well as practical suggestions. The book includes a comprehensive glossary, index and list of useful addresses.

This is a useful book, steeped in empirical knowledge of children with ill or disabled parents, and how to help them. It is rather discursive and repetitive in style. I personally preferred the last three chapters which are more practical and instructive than lengthily descriptive! Nonetheless, it is to be recommended for those who wish to help children and parents in this situation. It should be available in departmental and general hospital libraries.

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