

Further to these difficulties with clarity, this book is filled with acronyms and abbreviations. Perhaps it would have been better to remain with the long version of the names or titles for the first few usages, particularly if the reader never sees the title used again throughout the book.

However, it was appreciated that this book was intended to be written in plain language for the reader. Although the author targeted this book for a graduate-level trained audience of mental health professionals, he nonetheless relates many personal examples and uses colloquial language. However, while this style was refreshing, it is unfortunate that it was combined with confusing structural problems in the writing. For example, transitions that lead into the presentation of a list are often unclear and choppy, and sometimes lists appear "out of nowhere" and for no apparent reason. In addition, many chapters end with examples or stories whose summarizing functions are often unclear. In addition to these difficulties, Weaver presents an inadequate discussion of several topic areas, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Mental Status Examinations. These areas were discussed in very cursory detail, rendering them uninformative and potentially misleading for the reader without other knowledge of these areas.

Readers who are interested in pursuing their interest in DMH may be much better off directly discussing the opportunities and information that are available through their local Canadian Red Cross. Furthermore, substantial difficulties with the structure, organization, and clarity of this book may prove to be additionally frustrating for the reader. In sum, the reader may be best to avoid this book.

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Kotter, J. (1995). *Growing a Therapist*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 215 pp.

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*Reviewed by:* Denise J. Larsen, University of Alberta.

At great personal risk, Jeffrey Kottler has revealed his experience as counselor in *Growing a Therapist*. In his book, this well-known author reveals both his insecurities about his professional abilities in addition to his satisfaction and joy in helping others. *Growing a Therapist* represents a daring attempt to communicate uncertainties about his own practice as well as his sense of isolation as a therapist. Like other material authored by Kottler, the book is easy to read, personable, almost conversational in its approach. A recent literature search indicates that few recent psychotherapist autobiographies exist. Kottler provides a valuable contribution to the field and this work is a rare offering in books of this nature.

*Growing a Therapist* covers many issues which other therapists may recognize in themselves both personally and professionally. Kottler shares his experiences of being a child, a student, a neophyte counsellor, a father, an experienced therapist, and a teacher. From each of these vantage points, Kottler reflects how these experiences influenced his therapy and himself.

In a very personal way, Kottler explores the notion that becoming a healer of others requires that we be attentive to our own needs for healing. Using his own experience as a guide, Kottler shows how his past influences the ways in which he approaches his tasks as a therapist. Using a chronological narrative format, he reveals how his early experiences planted the seeds of pain and caring which provided the foundation for both his sense of success and his feelings of failure as a therapist. Readers familiar with Kottler's previous work, will recognize the emphasis which the author places on the role of caring in therapy. Yet, in this latest publication, he also explores the ways in which caring and responsibility have inflicted a personal cost when he has felt less than successful.

Kottler's honesty may seem unsettling in a profession that still strives for legitimacy. For example, he candidly admits that despite his impressive career as a therapist and author, he cannot, with certainty, understand what makes therapy work. In this way, *Growing a Therapist* is for both students and long established professionals who admit, perhaps quietly, that we often do not clearly understand how therapy works or why it does not. For Kottler, this admission is a revelation of self-doubt which appears to have visited him throughout his development and career as a therapist. In many ways, Kottler asks himself publicly the hard questions we may fear to face privately. Just like clients, we face difficult situations in life—situations that provide struggles. So, what makes us so well suited to help clients when we struggle just as they do? Kottler's answers are found in his own experiences of caring commitment to clients, his willingness to address his own issues, and his success with clients.

Perhaps the greatest strength of *Growing a Therapist* is the model it provides of a well-known, well-respected therapist working to address his own issues in the interests of improving himself and his practice. He offers his own struggle to remain genuine and caring no matter what role he is playing. He reveals his desire to remain human rather than hide behind a wall of cold professionalism. The book highlights Kottler's commitment to staying in touch with his own human experience, just as he encourages this of his clients.

A second strength of the book lies in Kottler's willingness to reveal the fears he experiences as a therapist. As therapists, we know that our clients often feel normalized by knowledge that others feel just as they do. Perhaps professionalism, vulnerability, or fear prevents us, as therapists, from experiencing that same relief. In the privacy and safety of solitary reading, Kottler allows us to learn that he experiences insecurities that may closely match our own. He offers readers the opportunity to normalize their experience.

Providing criticism of a book of this nature is not easy. Because of the book's very personal nature, criticism certainly seems more personal than editorial. With this in mind, I have two main criticisms of *Growing a Therapist*. First, my strongest editorial criticism of Kottler's book is the almost excessive feeling of insecurity which it portrays. While I found the book easy to read, the content was often unsettling as a result of the strong focus on Kottler's insecurities. This may be a direct reflection of the author's experience. Nevertheless, I wonder whether the lighter exceptions to this experience

may have been underplayed, or whether other therapists feel such insecurities as pervasively.

My second editorial criticism is based on Kottler's near exclusion of the integral role that his marriage may have played in his life and professional development. For example, Kottler reveals how his role as a father informs his role as a therapist. He provides interesting snapshots of the richness that each role has provided to the other. Unfortunately, he shares less of this wisdom regarding his experience as a husband. While Kottler may wish to keep this private, it leaves readers' questions about balancing professional and marital roles mostly unanswered.

In sum, I recommend *Growing a Therapist* for both professional counselors and those in training who are interested in exploring the relationship between their role as a therapist and as a person. It may also be appealing to those who wonder about the lives and issues of therapeutic practitioners. In authoring this book, Kottler has provided readers with a safe opportunity to share common professional and personal concerns. He has also provided a significant role model for those of us who believe that we must be aware of our own personal issues both in and out of the counselling office.

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