

I found this book to be very informative and helpful. It is extremely comprehensive, and covers a broad range of topics that are relevant to issues of loss and grief. I particularly appreciated the authors' definition of loss, in that it encompasses other life events, as well as death. I also found the assessment tools, intake forms and activities to be instructive and interesting, and believe that they would be very helpful to use with clients in counselling. In addition, the session-by-session description of group counselling would be extremely useful in planning a grief support group. The authors provided case examples throughout the book, which were helpful in understanding the concepts that were discussed, and in showing how to work with a variety of special issues and/or clients. Although the authors provided a broad description of theories and models of bereavement, they did not go into any of them in depth. Thus, if one is interested in theory, he/she will have to look to other sources.

Overall, I found the book to be quite well written, with a lot of information and helpful suggestions for the counsellor. I would highly recommend this book to all counsellors and counselling students, as loss and grief are inevitable aspects of working with people in the counselling field.

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Mitchell, John J. (1998). *The natural limitations of youth: The predispositions that shape the adolescent character*. Stamford, CT. Ablex Publishing.

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Adolescence is a tempestuous time when a young person's healthy and natural self-love runs the danger of becoming perverted into something sinister and life-denying. The challenge for adult mentors is to maintain in youth a healthy self-regard, without allowing it to degenerate into an egocentric and anti-social self-absorption.

In this admirable treatise, John J. Mitchell explores that fragile space between an adolescent's healthy and natural self-love, and the disastrous egoism which looms like a thunderhead over youth. Mitchell has no time for those romantic clichés that would have us believe that youth are naturally noble and good, for the simple truth is that: "... adolescent potential has no guaranteed direction; for the natural talent of youth to mature it must be aimed and trained: (pp. xiii - xiv).

Mitchell's focus is on "how easily youth are corrupted and how readily they are broken" (p. xv). While adolescents have no preordained nature, they nevertheless do possess predispositions and natural limitations which make them vulnerable. It is these predispositions which are the locus of his concern. To examine them he organizes the book into three sections: Adolescent Intelligence; Adolescent Selfishness; and Adolescent Companionship, Friendship, and Love.

Adolescents have trouble thinking clearly, consistently, and coherently. While they welcome the onset of reason, "they are apprehensive about it because they have no real mastery of it" (p. 64). Consequently, adolescent intelligence is marked by egocentricity and wishful thinking, making youth prone to certain critical decision-

making errors. The book's centre is "Adolescent Selfishness." Mitchell identifies "developmental selfishness" as a "normal, natural, inevitable fact of adolescent development" (p. 93). Such inherent selfishness is best understood as a simple, uncomplicated sort of animal spirit.

At the other end of the spectrum is "narcissistic selfishness." This is a pathological and oppressive condition which, if not ameliorated, sows the seeds for a lifetime of misery: Narcissistically selfish persons . . . show little concern for the needs of others; they judge everyone from the standpoint of usefulness or nonusefulness . . . they love to be the object of admiration, but despise it when others are admired" (pp. 97 - 98). This grim prospect is further encouraged by our society's "isolation of youth from real life, . . . and by the endless barrage of narcissistic images hurled at youth by our image-driven society" (p. 99). The challenge is to prevent adolescents from progressing into full-blown narcissistic selfishness — a difficult task, given a popular culture which glorifies self-aggrandizement.

In the third section, Mitchell surveys adolescent friendship and love, pointing out that because teens have yet to establish a secure, mature identity, adolescent love and friendship involve something less than the Aristotelian ideal. The author has an impressive grasp of the literature, and presents his arguments in lucid, jargon-free prose. He is both insightful and entertaining, and one of the small pleasures of reading this book is encountering such gems as this from Mark Twain: "In all matters of opinion, our adversaries are insane."

This is a hopeful book. The author is careful to remind us that adults have a remarkable power to shape and mold the adolescent character. For Mitchell, understanding the adolescent character is to further understand that what youth most require are the encouragement, stewardship, and love of engaged and committed adults. *The Natural Limitations of Youth* should appeal to a wide readership. It will be a welcome addition to the professional libraries of school counsellors, youth workers, and teachers, while at the same time providing a convenient roadmap for anyone who is puzzled by the eccentricity of adolescent thought and behaviour.