

Book Review / Compte rendu

Alderson, K. (2012). *Breaking Out II: The Complete Guide to Building a Positive LGBTI Identity*. [Affirmation prise II : guide complet d'élaboration d'une identité LGBTI positive.] London, ON: Insomniac Press. ISBN: 978-155483-062-6, 482 pages

Reviewed by: Ryan D. Hancock

ABSTRACT

This book is an excellent hands-on manual for helping LGBTI individuals develop a positive self-image and acceptance of who they are within society. The author provides recommendations for better understanding one's self and connecting to LGBTI culture and the dominant culture, while also addressing the unique concerns of LGBTI adolescents. The author offers a step-by-step guide for improving one's self-esteem and self-acceptance through the use of worksheets, charting, visualization, goal-setting, and other experiential exercises. Also included are self-evaluations that assist readers in gauging their own improvement in the skill areas discussed.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre est un excellent manuel pratique pour aider les personnes LGBTI à développer une image positive d'elles-mêmes et une acceptation de leur place dans la société. L'auteur formule des recommandations pour une meilleure connaissance de soi, pour se brancher à la culture LGBTI et à la culture dominante, tout en traitant des préoccupations propres aux adolescents LGBTI. Il propose un guide par étape visant à améliorer l'estime de soi et l'acceptation de soi grâce à l'utilisation de feuilles de travail, de mises en graphique, de visualisation, d'établissement d'objectifs, et d'autres exercices expérimentiels. On y trouve aussi des auto-évaluations qui aident le lecteur à mesurer son propre cheminement dans les domaines de compétence discutés.

This book is a well-written, hands-on guide for helping LGBTI individuals develop a positive self-image and increase their self-acceptance. The author, Kevin Alderson, is an associate professor of counselling psychology at the University of Calgary and an accomplished author of eight books and many articles. In the book, Dr. Alderson uses his 26 years as a practicing psychologist to provide an excellent guide for self-growth. He approaches the journey to a more positive LGBTI identity through addressing five primary life domains: mental, behavioural, emotional, social, and spiritual. He provides a detailed description of how these five life domains impact LGBTI individuals' lives throughout the book's four main sections: Connecting with Self, Connecting with LGBTI Culture, Reconnecting with the Dominant Culture, and the Special Concerns of Adolescents. The author guides the reader on how to address the effects of each life domain within the larger subject of that section through the use of worksheets, charting, visualization,

goal-setting, and other experiential exercises. Also included are self-evaluations that assist readers in gauging their own improvement in the skill areas discussed. These evaluations provide readers with pre- and posttests to gauge not only initial levels of competency with the skills discussed, but also tangible measures of their own growth in these areas.

The book is separated into four distinct yet interwoven main sections. Each main section is further broken up into two subsections: the first focusing on lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, and the second on transgender, transsexual, and intersex individuals. The first main section—addressing the self—guides the readers along a self-examination into their own internalized thoughts, biases, and beliefs regarding how their sexuality affects who they are as people. This section reviews facing internalized homophobia, biphobia, self-esteem, body image, minimalization, denial, compartmentalization, stereotyping, conformity, and issues of spirituality. Section 2—addressing LGBTI culture—focuses on how to discover and engage in the LGBTI community. The author discusses finding a community, developing friendships, finding a partner, having great sex, and maintaining romantic relationships. Section 3—addressing the dominant culture—provides a step-by-step guide to disclosing one's sexual orientation to both family and nonfamily members. The subsection on transgender, transsexual, and intersex individuals provides specific guidance on learning about gender and special disclosure issues, as well as information on fetishistic cross-dressing individuals. The fourth and final section—addressing special concerns of adolescents—provides an excellent review of the internal and external aspects of LGBTI individuals in adolescence. Particular attention is paid to ways that adolescents can work through their struggles with gender and sexual identity development.

Although the author's coverage of so many LGBTI identities allows application to a wide variety of clients and lay readers, it impedes the potential depth that could be accomplished. A focus on fewer LGBTI groups could be useful to provide practitioners and clients with a greater dialogue and course of treatment. Additionally, the text could benefit from a more distinct focus on racial and ethnic populations. Although the author broaches issues related to multiculturalism throughout the text, a section devoted solely to this topic would be valuable. Individuals from these populations have unique struggles and developmental experiences that would have been beneficial to explore. The inclusion of a separate chapter on racial and ethnic minorities could increase the usefulness of the book with members of those populations.

Overall, this book is an outstanding guidebook for all individuals seeking to improve their self-esteem and self-acceptance, particularly for lay readers with no counselling or psychotherapy backgrounds. This handbook can provide assistance and guidance to a wide variety of LGBTI clients and lay individuals because of the author's skill at breaking down complicated concepts into smaller, easier to understand parts. Overall, the author's focus on the individual's journey of self-examination and personal growth throughout the book provides an excellent

framework to improve one's self-esteem and self-acceptance, regardless of the particular group the reader identifies with.

As well, this text will be an excellent resource for mental health practitioners. It will be particularly useful as bibliotherapy when combined with traditional cognitive-behavioural therapy to discuss the client's completion of the included exercises and experiential activities. In addition, the pre- and posttest assessments provide excellent insight into the client's competency with the skills discussed.

About the Author

Ryan D. Hancock is an assistant professor of counselling in the Department of Educational Leadership and Technology at Northwestern State University of Louisiana. His main research interests are intimate partner violence, competency with sexual minorities, and counselling adolescents and children. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Illinois, as well as a National Certified Counselor.

Address correspondence to Dr. Ryan Hancock, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Teacher Education Center, Pod D, Room 103L, Natchitoches, Louisiana, USA 71497; e-mail <hancockr@nsula.edu>