

Book Review / Compte rendu

Alderson, K. G. (2020). *Addictions Counseling Today: Substances and Addictive Behaviors*. SAGE Publications. ISBN: 978-1-5443-9233-2, xxxiv+720 pp.

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ABSTRACT

The issue of addictions and treatment has been increasingly prioritized by policy-makers in recent years, yet the meaning of the concept remains ambiguous. Throughout the 22 chapters of his book *Addiction Counseling Today*, Kevin G. Alderson weaves together the most salient theories, research, and therapies from the field of addiction and from contemporary developments in policy and practice. The book examines what the tenets of recovery and treatment mean in terms of not only the professional involved in providing treatment but also what recovery looks like for each client. Chapters cover the influence of ethics in treatment, theories of addiction, the neurosciences, and the recognition of behavioural addictions, including the controversies attached to the use of particular labels. A notable strength involves the author's inclusion of the lived experiences of those who have dealt with various addictions. This book will be essential reading for practitioners, researchers, policy-makers, and students in the fields of addiction, social care, psychology, and criminal justice.

RÉSUMÉ

Au cours des dernières années, les décideurs politiques se sont beaucoup intéressés aux phénomènes de la dépendance et de son traitement, mais la signification de ce concept reste floue. Tout au long des 22 chapitres de son livre *Addiction Counseling Today*, Kevin G. Alderson regroupe et recoupe les points les plus saillants de la théorie, de la recherche, et des thérapies en lien avec le domaine des dépendances, ainsi que les progrès actuels en matière de politique et de pratique. Dans ce livre, on examine ce que signifient les grands principes du rétablissement et du traitement, non seulement en ce qui concerne le professionnel qui s'occupe de la prestation du traitement mais aussi ce qui constitue un rétablissement chez chacun des clients. Certains chapitres portent sur l'influence de l'éthique sur le traitement, les théories de la dépendance, et les neurosciences, en passant par la reconnaissance des dépendances comportementales, notamment les controverses associées au recours à des étiquettes particulières. L'une des forces de l'ouvrage tient au fait que l'auteur inclut des expériences vécues

par des personnes qui ont eu à affronter diverses formes de dépendance. L'ouvrage deviendra une lecture essentielle pour les praticiens, les chercheurs, les décideurs politiques, et les étudiants dans les domaines de la dépendance, les soins sociaux, la psychologie, et la justice pénale.

But now my eyes are open as I watch the sequence occur in other addicts. My ears are open, too, as I hear the gasping coughs as if their last breath had just been exhaled. (Alderson, 2020, p. 251)

Some readers will be familiar with Dr. Kevin Alderson's work for its influence on LGBTQ psychology at the University of Calgary, where he is a professor emeritus of counselling psychology. Alderson is the author of ten books, with some of his most influential works being *Counseling LGBTI Clients*, *Beyond Coming Out: Experiences of Positive Gay Identity*, *Same-Sex Marriage: The Personal and the Political* (jointly with Kathleen A. Lahey), and *Breaking Out II: The Complete Guide to Building a Positive LGBTI Identity*. He was also the editor of *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, the only national peer-reviewed journal of its kind in Canada, from 2008 to 2020.

In December of 2019, Alderson published his latest book, *Addictions Counseling Today: Substances and Addictive Behaviors*. This comprehensive edition weaves the objective lens of diagnosis and statistics with the subjective tenets of addiction located in those who have navigated its trappings first-hand. In this way, this book covers addiction from conception to treatment, providing readers with a wide-sweeping portrayal of the addictions field, a welcome addition to the ever-changing landscape.

It is difficult not to like the author with his reflexive style. Across the book's 720 pages, Alderson invites his readers into a range of addictions from alcohol, drug abuse, and nicotine to various process addictions including sex, the Internet, gaming, social media, and gambling. Not to be overlooked, there is an excellent chapter detailing the neuroscience of addiction. Within the 22 chapters buttressed with case examples, individual and group exercises, plus chapter summaries, the material is structured to meet the requirements of an introductory text for students and novice counsellors and to function as a comprehensive reference guide for more seasoned addiction practitioners at all phases of their careers. The author successfully includes reflections of an active user to support the application of the stages of change model to goal setting practices to ensure practitioners are meeting their clients "where they are at."

For readers of this journal, an intriguing inclusion is the focus on the new DSM-5 classifications for addiction with an emphasis on the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), an independent accrediting body that ensures that graduate counselling programs

in the United States and throughout the world uphold the standards found within the counselling profession. Of contemporary importance is that CACREP draws reference to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) classifications and to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). By accounting for CACREP, the Alderson textbook is in line with the more recent classifications of the DSM-5, ensuring more accurate global and cultural relevance.

Five years ago, I read Mack et al.'s (2016) *Clinical Textbook of Addictive Disorders*, fourth edition. This textbook received substantial critical acclaim when it was published, and it was lauded as a powerful and comprehensive tool for all practitioners considering work in the addictions-treatment realm. The textbook is worthy of these accolades, as it is undoubtedly a useful reference tool for those wanting significant information. But I felt that something was missing from the book, that it lacked a critical component that left me feeling uneasy about endorsing it as a "go to" read for my fellow practitioners.

Arguably, addiction is a highly contested term that circumvents any universal definition. What is missing for the usual textbooks in the addiction field is the acknowledgement that various addictions are personal and require a subjective lens to complete the picture.

Therefore, the success of *Addictions Counseling Today* lies in the author's ability to circumvent the usual layout and mundaneness of comprehensive addiction manuals with the addition of his own experience and the intimate experiences of others, which bring welcome colour to the chapters. This inclusion of first-person accounts speaks to the subjective nature of addiction and assists the practitioner in viewing the "person" behind the terms and labels that attempt to encapsulate the human condition.

As informative as it is practical, *Addictions Counseling Today* should be required reading for both students and practitioners who are looking for a textbook that adds a subjective lens to an already comprehensive guide. For anyone who treats clients with an addictive disorder, this is a must-have for a practical, hands-on addition to any health practitioner's library.

References

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