

## *Book Review / Compte rendu*

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Wexler, D. B., & Sweet, H. B. (2021). *#MeToo-informed therapy: Counseling approaches for men, women, and couples*. W. W. Norton and Company. ISBN: 978-0-393-71466-1, xvii + 261 pp.

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### ABSTRACT

The #MeToo movement was an important cultural phenomenon that called on men to take accountability for their harmful behaviours, such as violating boundaries, engaging in sexual harassment, and committing sexual assaults. It was also an opportunity to validate survivors' experiences and to unite men and women together as allies. However, #MeToo-type behaviours still occur today and many women are deeply affected by the harmful actions of men. This book was written as a clinical resource for counsellors working with men, women, and couples involved in or affected by #MeToo behaviours. This essential read covers the history of the #MeToo movement, explores gender norms, and suggests clinical strategies for intervention. By adding this book to their clinical library, counsellors will enrich their repertoire of skills for working with men who have offended, empowering female clients, and supporting couples affected by #MeToo behaviours.

### RÉSUMÉ

Le mouvement #MeToo (#moiaussi) a été un phénomène culturel important qui appelait les hommes à assumer la responsabilité de leurs comportements préjudiciables, par exemple la transgression des limites, le harcèlement sexuel, et les agressions sexuelles. Il a aussi permis de reconnaître les expériences des survivantes et des survivants et d'établir des alliances entre hommes et femmes. Toutefois, des comportements comme ceux révélés par le mouvement #MeToo se produisent encore aujourd'hui et de nombreuses femmes sont encore profondément affectées par les actions préjudiciables d'hommes. Ce livre a été écrit pour servir de ressource clinique pour les conseillers qui travaillent auprès d'hommes, de femmes, et de couples engagés dans des comportements #MeToo ou touchés par de tels comportements. Cet ouvrage essentiel retrace l'histoire du mouvement #MeToo, explore les normes propres aux genres, et propose des stratégies cliniques d'intervention. En ajoutant ce livre à leur

bibliothèque clinique, les conseillers enrichiront leur répertoire de compétences pour travailler auprès d'hommes qui ont commis des délits, autonomiser des clientes, et soutenir des couples aux prises avec des comportements #MeToo.

This powerful, thought-provoking book is an essential read for counsellors and students. The authors of this book, David B. Wexler and Holly B. Sweet, offer their clinical and academic expertise on gender and the #MeToo movement. The authors recognize that #MeToo behaviours affect individuals of all genders and sexual orientations, but they focus their scope on cisgender, heterosexual men and women. The book is organized into two sections. The first section is intended to increase the reader's understanding of the #MeToo movement while the second section offers clinical approaches for professionals working with clients involved in the #MeToo movement. Even if one does not specialize in serving populations of offenders and survivors of #MeToo behaviours, this book provides practical strategies for working with individuals and couples impacted by rigid gender norms. Because such norms have a ubiquitous presence in daily life, the suggested interventions are applicable to many clients with whom we work in our regular practice.

The first section is comprised of five chapters. In Chapter 1, the authors provide a historical overview of the #MeToo movement, suggest a definition of sexual misconduct, highlight the impact of the movement on our culture, describe the importance of language, and clarify issues around the movement. The authors propose that a range of severity exists for #MeToo behaviours. This proposition left me to wonder whether the severity of impact on the survivor should take precedence over the severity of perpetrator behaviour. In Chapter 2, the authors offer an overview of male and female gender norms and examples of how gender operates as a dysfunctional system. In Chapters 3 and 4, the authors discuss the various types of #MeToo perpetrators. #MeToo perpetrators are separated into those who behave in predatory ways toward women and those who exhibit clueless or inept behaviour. The authors describe the traits typically observed in these two types of perpetrators, consider motivations for their behaviour, and provide real-life examples. In Chapter 5, the authors discuss intersectionality and the importance of cultural responsiveness and awareness in working with survivors of #MeToo behaviours. As a counselling psychology graduate student, I appreciated this inclusion, given that cultural considerations should be infused in all aspects of our clinical work.

The second section consists of seven chapters that are concentrated on counselling approaches for working with men and women involved in or impacted by #MeToo behaviours, respectively. In Chapters 6 and 7, the authors offer clinical strategies for working with men who have perpetrated, who are supposedly clueless, or who want to reflect on their past behaviour. The interventions offered in

this chapter are practical, reasonable, and therapeutic; they include increasing empathy and developing skills in apologizing. In Chapter 8, the authors shift their focus onto empowering women who are survivors of #MeToo behaviours, including responding assertively to sexual misconduct or microaggressions. This chapter provides clinical guidance on possible therapeutic paths when working with women and gently challenging unhelpful beliefs held by survivors. In Chapters 9 and 10, Wexler and Sweet hone in on sexual misconduct at school and in the workplace. These chapters provide sample vignettes as examples for working with women in these contexts. I particularly appreciated the suggestions for social justice and advocacy work outside of individual therapy (e.g., creating hotlines and women's groups, providing training to workplace employees). It is essential that we as counsellors advocate for societal change as a way to prevent sexual misconduct and to shift harmful gender norms. In Chapter 11, the authors spotlight working with couples when the man has offended or the woman is a survivor. In Chapter 12, the authors discuss the importance of creating alliances between men and women. The chapter is full of useful tips for increasing bystander intervention, supporting men in developing healthy relationships with women, encouraging men to support #MeToo-affected women, and responding to sexist behaviour and comments. Many of these suggestions are practical, but given that the goal of these suggestions was to resist gender norms, I would have preferred that the suggested replies to microaggressions offered to women had a more assertive stance. For example, if it is suggested that men say, "I really prefer not to speak about women in this way," women should be able to express similar sentiments, rather than "That's stupid, surely you have a better joke than that" (p. 216).

As a psychologist in training, I benefitted enormously from reading this book and would recommend it to any counsellor. Working specifically with #MeToo preparators and survivors may be a niche practice, but the greater focus on gender norms, empowering women, and working with men who have hurt others makes this book a valuable resource for many counsellors. Gender considerations are an essential component of case conceptualization and treatment; as such, the suggestions in the book may be applicable to clients not directly affected by the #MeToo movement. In fact, I have used some of the suggestions in my own clinical practice, particularly the exploration of gender norms. Although this is outside of the book's scope, reading this book inspired me to think about and start questioning gender norms at a larger societal and institutional level, such as the distinction between sexual misconduct and sexual assault using a legal standard, given that laws historically were developed by men. Overall, the book was well organized, provided a multitude of examples to support the reader's learning, and held my interest throughout. This book would be a welcomed addition to any clinical library.

### **About the Author**

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