

Introduction to Counselling Skills: Text and Activities by Richard Nelson-Jones, 2000, Director of the Cognitive Humanistic Institute, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Sage Publications, pp. 352, Price: (Cloth) \$ 55.00, (Paper) \$ 18.99.

The book titled 'Introduction to Counselling Skills' by Richard Nelson-Jones is one of the few textbooks with interactive perspectives bringing together basic counselling skills with brief theoretical concepts, for Counselling trainees, trainers, researchers and professionals. This book reflecting the experiences and needs of the needy and the helper broadly covers the fundamentals of all the basic counselling skills

It is often observed that most of the counsellor training books tend towards representing psychotherapy, (mainly clinical interventions or problem solving-remedies), or purely theoretical orientations, and are aimed at specific groups or clients, or settings. However, this book has drawn together in one context, as much consensual information, practice knowledge, and basic concepts as possible.

This book has five parts. It begins with part one, which has a brief introduction to counselling, a self- exploration of motivation, communication and feeling aspects, helping process and certain problem management skills at a very basic level. The second part lays emphasis on a thorough understanding of client - counsellor relationship aiming at developing a deeper therapeutic relationship so as to workout the issues in the helping process. Specific importance is given for sharpening listening skills and starting of the helping process.

The third part outlines the 'understanding stage', through clarification, expansion of understanding, skills and strategies. In part four the 'changing stage' process is outlined with detailed procedures including setting goals, planning, strategies for changing communication and thinking, etc. Finally this section outlines the comprehensive procedures for conducting a session.

Part five is devoted for examining ethics, values, law, etc. in detail. The last chapter emphasises directions for becoming a skilled counsellor and 'humane' in the words of the author. The book also contains the glossary of specific terms and bibliography with updated journals and books, which will be also a source for the readers to explore further.

A specific feature of this book is that the author tries to integrate skill practice through the various stages and integration of the skills with personal development, thus affirming that becoming a counsellor goes along with personal growth. The organisation of this book is systematic. Specific outcomes, defining the concepts, case studies, and the summaries of the chapters and activities which can be carried out within and outside the classroom are outlined. The author presents his own practical and training experience-based wealth of information through this book. It is also commendable that his self-disclosures as a counsellor are also provided and thus may inspire readers.

Compared to other contemporary books of the genre, this book keeps its exclusive identity from Allen Ivey and Mary Bradford Ivey, Gerard Egan, Robert Carkhuff and Cormier and Cormier etc. This difference may be due to the theoretical orientation towards cognitive-based a problem solving approach. The activities given in this book are suitable to any situation and easy for any trainer for use in training and for practice in the classroom set-up. The author strongly proposes that one needs to be 'humane' to help one another. Thus, he has emphasised the significance of personal transformation for becoming a counsellor.

As we know, no single volume can be free from all the limitations or can give a comprehensive elaboration of all the skills, techniques, and theories. Firstly, the very selection of the theoretical orientation reflected all throughout this book suggests that the title of this book could have included the term '*Cognitive approaches*' since the theoretical orientation is highly focused on cognitive strategies. Though affective components are also included in this book, the reviewer feels that adequate emphasis has not been given. Secondly, the

sequence of the presentation of the skills could have been made independently, with some continuity so as to help the users of this book to learn them independently and integrate them as they proceed further. Thirdly, though the author has given emphasis on 'becoming humane' in most of the chapters and devoted a chapter exclusively, no specific guidelines or skills or strategies could be found. Finally, the author has not given emphasis on multi-cultural issues, which are often encountered by the professionals. And this is a major limitation indeed.

In spite of all the limitations, what makes the work commendable is the well-knit structure that offers an exhaustive account of basic skills and guidelines necessary to equip the users with the requisite insights and understanding for effective functioning in the field. As the author suggests, this book is strongly recommended for anyone who is enrolling for basic course in counselling. Skills included in this book are broadly recommended for mental health professionals, teachers, social workers, probation workers, managers, supervisors, personal officers, pastoral care workers, etc. Further, the author claims that the skills given in this book are also widely applicable to varieties of situations such as disturbed relationships, suicidal ideation, and women's issues - which have been marginalised or silenced in various traditional practices. Thus, the utility of this book goes beyond the therapeutic limit of the counselling profession.

Thus, such a book should be, a part of academic libraries, a guide for researchers and it must be had by counsellors as a very effective 'handmaid' and is recommended for all those who are in the field of helping professions to learn, grow and become more warm, helping and humane professionals. The author deserves all praise for his excellent work.

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