

Reviews

Domestic Violence and Mental Health

Edited by Louise M. Howard, Gene Feder
and Roxanne Agnew-Davies
RCPsych Publications, 2013, £15.00, pb, 120 pp.
ISBN: 9781908020567

The aim of this book is to offer practical guidance on how to identify domestic violence and respond to patient disclosures in a clinical setting. It is aimed at all mental health professionals, although general practitioners are likely to find it a valuable resource.

The book covers the bi-directional association between mental health and domestic violence and its prevalence. The following chapters offer multiple suggestions on aiding disclosures of domestic violence, as well as when and how to ask. They give practical advice on creating the right environment to allow disclosure and suggestions on how to broach the subject and then explore it further. The authors advise on how to respond to disclosures and provide examples of good practice as well as discussing undertaking assessments in difficult situations. The final chapters contain guidance on intervening for patients who have made disclosures and cover medico-legal definitions related to domestic violence.

There is limited evidence available for the authors to make use of, but what is available is well referenced and where evidence is lacking, good practice guidance is based on the authors' own considerable expertise. The appendices have lists of contacts and organisations that offer support to those experiencing domestic violence and other resources for professionals to make use of.

I found the chapters on prevalence and the association between domestic violence and mental health a little overwhelming as the literature is very thoroughly documented. The following chapters are very helpful and address the common errors that well-meaning professionals might make, highlighting the barriers to disclosures of domestic violence. Guidance is offered on how and why to ask about domestic violence, with example questions and statements to improve professionals' skills. The chapters on responding and intervening offer suggestions on what to avoid doing or saying as well as where to gain support, safety and advocacy for patients. The risks associated with victims attempting to leave their partners are also addressed. The final chapter is slightly more specialised and gives advice for those attending court, and will appeal to a smaller, more specialised audience.

Overall, the book is well written, thoroughly researched and has already changed my practice. Every mental health professional should have the skills to manage domestic violence and this book will be a valuable addition to anyone's personal library.

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Working with Teenage Parents: Handbook of Theory and Practice for Practitioners Working with Pregnant Teenagers, Young Parents and Their Children

By J. Raphael-Leff, N. Malberg, D. Shai, M. Mills,
E. Hopper, M. Zaphirious Woods, et al
Anna Freud Centre, 2011, £15.00, pb, 258 pp.
ISBN: 9780954931933

Working with Teenage Parents is a textbook that aims to increase the clinical practitioner's psychodynamic understanding of the 'maturational processes' that occur when adolescence and parenthood coincide. It works on the premise that in order to cultivate 'developmental processes in the baby or toddler', the young parent's developmental needs also need to be met, which relies heavily on the skill of the practitioner.

The book is divided into five study modules: (1) interrelationships, (2) adolescents, (3) babies in teen families, (4) toddlers, and (5) families, groups and organisations. It enables a versatile approach to learning, accommodating both 'self-reflective' study and providing material, namely lecture handouts and interactive 'role-play' exercises, that can be delivered as part of formal group training. An interactive DVD is also included within the text to consolidate key learning points.

The intended aims and objectives for each module are clearly laid out and the often confusing, verbose explanations within the main text are concluded with key learning points. The glossary of terms and further reading recommendations within the training pack appendices are particularly useful.

The book's aims to cater for every teaching eventuality did at times prove to be to its detriment due to difficulties in navigating between the appropriate sections and discarding instructions not relevant to the chosen mode of study. Despite encouragement to reflect on group exercise points, for those self-studying, like myself, this was not always practical or particularly fruitful; perhaps I would have had a more rewarding experience if I had studied with a group.

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