

Review: Beata Ziólkowska; Jowita Wycisk: Self-destruction of children and youth

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ZIÓŁKOWSKA, BEATA AND JOWITA WYCISK. 2019. *SELF-DESTRUCTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH [AUTODESTRUKTYWNOŚĆ DZIECI I MŁODZIEŻY]*. WARSZAWA: DIFIN, ISBN: 978-83-8085-783-4, 300 PP. (PAPERBACK)

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Anyone who works with the youth knows that the period of adolescence is a specific life-phase for young students. “Socio- cultural changes, changing family patterns, too many incentives and the social pressure in many areas of human’s life” (p. 252) can cause problems, and teenagers often don’t deal appropriately with their feelings, emotions, and expressions. Also during this time, we have come to expect different and often rebellious, as well as undesirable behaviour from the young boys and girls. Every teacher, educator or someone who takes care of such young people, is inclined to support them effectively and when the functional disorders start to appear, they want to react positively towards them and work together to solve their problems. For those people, I would highly recommend the book “Self-destruction children and youth” written by Beata Ziółkowska and Jowita Wycisk.

The theme of this book is an issue that has been always really important for educationists, academics, mental health practitioners, and for society at large. Teenagers often display behavioural patterns that are closely related to self-destructive tendencies, especially during puberty. In spite of the fact that most of these attitudes have developmental meaning and have different purposes – gratification of psychological functions, reduction of anxiety facing challenges or problems – may have negative health consequences and effects on somatic development (p. 11). Additionally, something that may have minimized the source of stress, according to young people, appears to be the cause of their limitations, enslaving and addiction.

Ziółkowska i Wycisk concentrate on four phenomena in their book: eating disorders, self-mutilation, excessive alcohol and energy drink abuse, and drug addiction.

This dissertation includes six chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to the topic of a youth in the modern world. Authors focus on answering the question ‘what is the process of growing up’, and thereby analyse opportunities and risks among young peo-

ple. They write about teenagers' needs and developmental tasks. In the first chapter we can read how young people view themselves and their *bodies*. Writers also present problems of crisis amongst the youth: its essence and process. Readers are able to become familiar with the mechanism of identity-formation. Identity statuses, their consequences and the relevance of support systems are discussed in detail in this part of the book. Identity development in the context of family, peer group and culture is also outlined herein. Readers are familiarised with a detailed concept of connection between self-destruction, problematic behaviour and adolescence crisis. Problems of contemporary youth are also presented in the research: in the physiology of nervous system, self-esteem – assessing the body, young people and media and teenagers' mental health.

The second chapter deals with eating and malnutrition: detailed explanations, classification, diagnosis, disseminating, and a description of the treatment allows the readers to explore and understand adolescent eating disorders. Some conditions and mechanisms of the disorder are discussed through bio physiological and social factors, *cognitive recognition* skills and cultural aspects. The second chapter ends with the Polish and foreign reports on the subject. Authors indicate the importance of a balanced diet during a period of intense growth and somatic development. They emphasize the sensitivity of the sphere of eating where problems with functioning of the body, mental and social status can be seen. Threats, which may have, negative effects on perception of people, reality, especially in a virtual world and media are also articulated.

The third chapter is dedicated to the formation of tendencies connected with self-harming and the psychobiological characteristics of individuals who undertake such steps. This part takes into account "emotionality, cognitive processes, mental defences, ways of dealing with stress, an image of *self*, functioning of interpersonal relationships and neurophysiological reactions." (p. 147) The chapter begins with the terminology used in these cases, classifications, diagnosis and the popularity of self-harming behaviour. The process of disseminating these was based on a survey carried out in a number of countries. This research is a source of important information, which should be treated selectively. First, we ought to analyse the situation of a person, keeping in mind their life-story and individual psychological construction.

In the fourth part alcohol abuse is presented in detail. This problem is very significant, and I agree with the authors that alcohol abuse by adolescents is a risky behaviour, "...this substance does not have negative associations in the society". (p. 185) At the beginning readers are familiarised with the terminology and research on the use and abuse of alcohol and energy drinks. Then the diagnosis and different drinking patterns are presented. Authors describe circumstances and mechanism of using alcohol. Moreover, they characterize how people with such problems function in society. In my opinion a crucial part is the description of treating and psychotherapy for people who have alcohol abuse disorders along with their families. At the end of this chapter some research reports about the abuse of alcohol carried out between 2001 and 2008 are summarised.

The fifth chapter deals with problematic use of psychoactive substances. There has been a steady increase in supply of synthetic psychotropic drugs in the market which

have vague source-compositions, and are not known widely – as a result, medics and first responders often cannot apply correct rescue/resuscitation procedures after an accident or overdose. Therefore, preventive treatment is truly important. This chapter might be useful especially for practitioners in the area of education and caregiving – teachers, educators, psychologists, parents and many more people. Like the other parts of the book, the fifth chapter begins with the terminology and detailed description of some narcotic drugs and their usages. We can also read about the alarming results of research on the coverage of using such drugs and enhancers by teenagers and information about new psychoactive substances. The authors describe conditions, the mechanism and the stages of drug addiction.

Furthermore, the consequences of using such substances in the area of mental, social and somatic symptoms are presented. In the part devoted to treatment and psychotherapy, readers can get to know about the new models of working with people suffering from addiction and substance abuse problems. The need for individual therapy is highlighted. This chapter ends with studies into psychoactive substances, where different attitudes to the problem, areas and research done in many countries are introduced and discussed.

The last part of the book is entitled “The prevention of destructive behaviour” (p. 227). In my point of view this chapter is important and useful for the prevention of inadequate and risky behaviour among the youth. Schools can use many proposals, rules and solutions offered by practitioners, writers and other establishments, taking into account their specificity. Different ways to counteract and deal with self-destructive behaviours have been discussed based on foreign literature, mostly from the USA. The authors argue that the methods applied in other educational institutions may be an inspiration and a source of knowledge to develop action in specialist teams at our facilities. This chapter contains some elements of preventative system within the institution and on inter-institutional basis. The role of adult guardians of children, teachers, and other school staff, and the role of an emergency contact is also described in details. In this chapter we can find guidelines for procedures at school: beginning with monitoring the warning signals and ending with the intervention; how employees find out about the problem; how to talk to a teenager – basic principles of communication; intervention outside of school groups; cooperation with parents or legal guardians. Procedural issues are discussed based on the discourse developed by B. Walsh. This procedure tends to take notice of teacher-student relations, attitudes towards a teenager who has self-destructive behaviours and emphasises personal approach of an adult guardian. This book is a collection providing useful information about self-destructive behaviours. It helps to organize and enrich our knowledge through reading and interpreting test results and referring to relevant literature. This book is written in a language that is fluid, accessible and reader-friendly. The opinions of experts included in this edition where they share their expertise, experiences, and clinical practice are of crucial significance. In this book, every reader will find schematics and models showing mechanisms, system and structures, which may help understand dependency and relationships. The statistical information referenced in this book is often depicted in tables, so the data discussed is transparent and well organized. At the end of the

book supporting materials are included: the procedures how to deal with self-destructive behaviours, tests for guardians of young individuals who take risky actions, tips for legal guardians about warning signals connected with self-mutilation, along with drug and alcohol abuse. There is also a test AUDIT - Recognizing Alcohol Problems and a test devoted to the diagnosis of addiction for families. These research tools may be used in diagnostic work.

Overall, in this book, the authors succeeded in presenting the phenomenon of self-destruction from multiple perspectives: psychological, sociological, medical and neuropsychological. However, most important of all – the presented information and facts are organized both in practical and theoretical terms. As a teacher I highly recommend this book to all representatives of learning environments, students of pedagogy and people who participate in the process of raising young people. Teenagers' parents should also read this publication. As a PhD student- I recommend this text to theorists and researchers in the fields of social sciences and health science.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Joanna Jaworska is PhD student in pedagogy at The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, Poland.

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