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Book review: Systemic therapy and attachment narratives applications in a range of clinical settings, R Dallos R, A Vetere Routledge 2009

### Original Citation

Dale, Heather (2009) Book review: Systemic therapy and attachment narratives applications in a range of clinical settings, R Dallos R, A Vetere Routledge 2009. *The Independent Practitioner*. p. 16.

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of one of the founders of their espoused model strengthened, will probably find this an informative and enjoyable read. Equally, therapists from other backgrounds who are not looking for a CBT manual but who wish to be more informed about the work of one of the three most cited authors in the counselling and psychotherapy literature, will find this concise book very helpful.

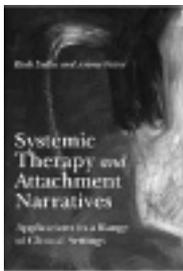
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## **Systemic therapy and attachment narratives applications in a range of clinical settings**

**R Dallos R, A Vetere**

Routledge 2009

ISBN 978-0415416580 £19.99



I was rather taken aback when I began this book. Where are the little boxes, giving an overview of the most important points, the pictures and the questions for discussion at the end of each chapter? This is not a reader-friendly book.

It is also a difficult book for those who, like me, are new to family therapy. This is supposedly a companion book for Dallos' earlier book. Not having read the earlier book, I cannot comment, but this volume is so thoroughly comprehensive that a companion book seems superfluous.

The thrust of the book is that dealing with our own and others' feelings is dependent (until therapy) on early attachment patterns. Allowing clients to tell their stories lets these patterns emerge, so that dysfunctional patterns can then be worked with in a behavioural

manner. The authors join systemic theory with attachment theory with narrative theory. Thus a new theory, attachment narrative therapy (ANT), comes out of their work.

Having introduced their model, the authors move on to look at life cycles, explaining that the ways in which people learn to deal with transitions at the beginning of their lives may be played out in subsequent families. The next chapters explain the use of the theory in a variety of settings: couples' work, emotions, trauma and traumatic events, grief and attachment, alcohol and eating addictions. There is a chapter called 'regulating emotions', which seems to offer a behavioural approach for dealing with feelings. The penultimate chapter, 'Formats for exploration', gives – at last – some practical ways of using the model.

The authors are psychologists who specialise in family therapy, and who have developed an interest in relationships, which might explain the rather dry and academic writing. There is almost a total lack of humour, though I did enjoy the analysis of TV's SuperNanny's use of the 'naughty step'. I also enjoyed the case studies and would have liked more of these. I was interested to see that this model only works with families or couples with some capacity for empathy, and that this is assessed early on. I would have liked to have read more about the assessment methods.

Throughout, the authors are at pains to demonstrate their cultural sensitivities and to point out that their model works cross culturally. I was not entirely convinced by this, but I appreciated that they had thought about the cultural implications of their way of working.

In conclusion, this an interesting, book even for those not directly involved in family therapy, or those who do not wish to work in a way that is primarily behavioural. Most of our clients, after all, will be

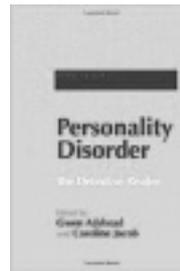
familiar with living in a family, or an approximation of that, and many of the issues brought up here will be applicable to individual and couples' work as well as family therapy. Once I had resigned myself to the fact that this would be a difficult read, I found plenty to interest me.

*Heather Dale, senior lecturer, Huddersfield University; senior accredited counsellor*

## **Personality disorder: the definitive reader** **Gwen Adshead, Caroline Jacob (eds)**

Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2009

ISBN 978-1843106401 £22.99



The 14 papers collected in this volume primarily address working with personality disorders in a team context, such as a ward setting, with other mental health professionals. (There are fascinating examples of the splitting and projection that can occur among team members, caught in the countertransference common with these patients.) This might suggest there is little here for the independent practitioner; in fact I found a wealth of insight in these pages that could be applied equally to working independently.

The book has three parts. Part I, 'Theory, aetiology and psychopathology', features two papers outlining research into the causes of personality disorders. While interesting, this section for me was the weakest of the book. The papers in question date from 1964 and 1974, and I suspect more recent research might offer a different picture. The 1964 paper, for example, reports a high correlation between illegitimacy and later development of personality disorders; given that being the child of unmarried parents is now common,