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Book review: Handbook of psychotherapy case formulation (2nd edition) Tracy D Eells (ed)  
Guilford Press 2010 978-1606239421

### Original Citation

Dale, Heather (2011) Book review: Handbook of psychotherapy case formulation (2nd edition)  
Tracy D Eells (ed) Guilford Press 2010 978-1606239421. *The Independent Practitioner*. pp. 21-22.

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# Reviews

## Working with children and teenagers using solution-focused approaches: enabling children to overcome challenges and achieve their potential

Judith Milner, Jackie Bateman  
Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2011  
ISBN 978-1849050821 £18.99



This is an excellent tool for anyone working with children and their families. The authors are both solution-focused practitioners,

trainers, consultants and writers. Previously a senior lecturer in social work, Judith Milner now acts as a therapist, consultant and independent expert to family courts in child protection, domestic violence and contested contact cases. Jackie Bateman was a former social worker in child protection and then youth offending, before joining Barnado's in 2002. She is currently a children's service manager for Barnado's Junction Project, a service that works with children and young people who display sexually concerning behaviour, and their families.

The authors have deduced from their valuable work experience that a solution-focused approach offers proven ways of working with children to help them overcome a range of difficulties. This may be seen as an academic solution to a mental health problem; however, the tasks and the conversation techniques help the children to identify their own strengths and achievements.

The approach of solution-focused questioning allows the therapist to capture the child's views, wishes and

worries. This then encourages positive decision-making and helps the child overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Chapter three focuses on achievable goals, using simple questions that the child will easily understand: How will you know that meeting with me will be worthwhile? What will you notice? What are your best hopes? What will happen for you to know that our work is helpful to you? What will other people notice? The questions provide the child and therapist with clear goals and encourage the child to discuss what they will actually be doing once they achieve their goals, thus increasing their taking of responsibility.

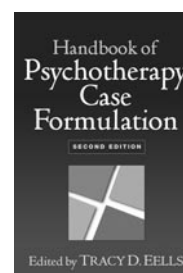
All the chapters have easy-to-read sections that include case examples and practice activities, which I found very helpful and potentially thought provoking for my own clients. Also included is extensive coverage of issues surrounding safeguarding children and work within child protection. The points raised are clear and engaging. Case examples are provided that are thought provoking, leading to reflective practice.

The authors are very clear not to label the child as a problem, instead taking the child seriously and respecting them in their own right. They also reflect on the importance of the skill of the therapist, effective communication and engagement, covering all aspects that will encourage a good working relationship between client and therapist. I cannot praise the authors too highly for sharing their valuable knowledge and experience in such an effective way so that the reader is excited by the thought of using these skills within therapy work with young people.

*Tarana Allen MBACP, therapist/  
counsellor in private practice.*

## Handbook of psychotherapy case formulation (2nd edition)

Tracy D Eells (ed)  
Guilford Press 2010  
ISBN 978-1606239421 £20



Case formulation is not necessarily a dry subject, so it is a shame that this is such a dry, if worthy, book. There are 14 chapters, all differently authored (apart from the first and the last, written by the editor), and each one is written in the most academically dry style.

The stated aim is to fill the gap between the need for, and the lack of training in, case formulation. Eells has edited a handbook in which different contributors discuss their way of doing case formulation, which is intended to fill the gap. He asked contributors to comment on eight perspectives in their case formulation, including the historical background to the approach, the conceptual framework, multicultural and inclusion/exclusion criteria, a case example and research into the approach.

Eells defines case formulation as being a guess or theory about the causes of a client's problems, which is then used as a blueprint for treatment planning, including the best way to develop a therapeutic alliance. (This is a huge over-simplification as Eells' own definition runs to more than 100 words.) Some of the case formulations made my eyes water, they are so detailed and thorough. Several contributors mention a formulation team, which suggests they are working in a supported environment. For those of us who

work in private practice, attempting such detailed analyses is not practical, and I would have welcomed a chapter that addressed this issue.

On the other hand, it is good to see multiculturalism as a theme that runs through each chapter, as well as having a chapter of its own. Unfortunately, some of the authors do not appear to have grasped the complexities of working multiculturally. The editor himself comments on this in the last chapter, which sums up the various approaches.

This last chapter, written by the editor, compares the other chapters, using the same perspectives. For me, this is the most interesting part of the book, and I was sorry that I had come to it at the end, rather than the beginning of the book. By the time I read it I already knew that pretty much all the authors say the same thing: that the steps in case formulation are to collect data, interpret data, apply data and see if it works. If not, revise. That, in a nutshell, is what this book takes 432 pages to say.

*Heather Dale FBACP (Snr Accred), counsellor/psychotherapist in private practice and senior lecturer, University of Huddersfield.*

### **A woman's unconscious use of her body: a psychoanalytic perspective** Dinora Pines

Routledge 2010  
ISBN 978-415558075 £19.99



**D**inora Pines' collection of papers, which are now republished, continue to be as profound and innovative as when they were first published. She

focuses on significant moments and transitions in women's lives, providing a psychoanalytic understanding of women's relationships with their bodies. Although psychoanalytic in

essence, she brings new and creative insights and understanding, that, on occasion, are different from traditional psychoanalysis, but without losing its foundation. She takes us through the female lifecycle, including adolescence, pregnancy and childbirth, infertility and abortion, menopause, and old age. She also includes two papers on the traumatic effects of the Holocaust on survivors, and the impact on the second generation.

As a woman and a therapist, I found this book intriguing, gripping, and useful. It triggered me to reflect upon my own transitions and journey through the lifecycle as a woman. I found Pines' open admission of, and reflection upon, aspects of her own lifecycle both refreshing and comforting. The only weakness, in my opinion, is a seeming assumption of familiarity with psychoanalytic terminology and concepts. Fortunately, although not a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, I do have a foundational teaching in psychoanalytic/psychodynamic psychotherapy, so the book was somewhat easy for me to understand, although I needed to refresh my memory on a few concepts. Even without an understanding of the psychoanalytic approach, however, the book will probably make sense to therapists of various orientations, as much is explained in the text, and there is a clear, succinct glossary.

I found it stimulating and informative from beginning to end, and an essential text for my learning as a therapist who values working in a woman-centred way with female clients, and also for my understanding of my own body and soul as I journey through my own transitions as a woman approaching midlife. I have plans to re-read and study it further, as I believe it will afford me more learning and deeper insights on each reading and I hope to incorporate these into my therapy practice.

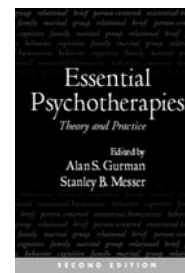
This is a much-needed text on the subject of a woman's physical and intrapsychic journey, and how these interrelate. I would recommend it

to female therapists of various orientations, and feel it could also be useful for male therapists working with women, and for men with female partners. It is a book that requires an open mind in order to embrace the depth of the female lifecycle, and some very sensitive and profound issues and aspects of womanhood.

*Roni Beadle MBACP, counsellor, dance therapist and writer working in private practice and for SEED (Support and Empathy for Eating Disorders), a charity in East Yorkshire.*

### **Essential psychotherapies (3rd edition)** Stanley B Messer, Alan S Gurman (eds)

Guilford Press 2011  
ISBN 978-1609181970 £50.95



If you are unfamiliar with Messer and Gurman's comprehensive *Essential Psychotherapies*, then on first sight of this third, updated edition you could

be forgiven for classifying it as 'reference only' without delving much deeper. Yet this would be a genuine oversight. The book is both practical and enlightening in terms of the depth, breadth, excellence, and relevance of the material it presents regarding psychotherapeutic theory, practice and research, both past and current, and across modalities. It is a welcome reminder of the responsibility of the integrative practitioner.

Each self-contained chapter is dedicated to one of 12 core theoretical approaches, perceived by the editors to be the 'bedrock' of current training, practice and research. The individual chapters are written by leading academics and clinicians in their fields who have succeeded in presenting their material in a thorough, clear, contemporaneous and engaging way. We are skilfully and consistently guided through the