

Reviews

Personal critiques of new books for counsellors and psychotherapists working with children, young people and families

You're Not My F*cking Mother and Other Things Gen Z Say in Therapy

Jeanine Connor
PCCS Books 2024
ISBN 978-1915220455



This is a brilliant book, mostly in dialogue as the title suggests, which makes it inviting and accessible. It's not just readable, I would suggest it's compulsive reading. The stories are memorable and illustrative of the range of issues that Generation Z bring to therapy. Gen Z are those born between the mid-1990s and the early-2010s, who, compared with previous generations, are living with huge advances in technology, but also suffering the 'permacrisis' of our current times.

After an introduction which sets the scene, and a chapter which links to the author's observation of a mother and baby dyad, there are eight chapters, each of which focuses on a particular issue or developmental stage, framed around a 'client' in therapy. These are all 100% fictitious, rather than pseudonyms or anonymised clients; no mean feat for any writer who is also a therapist. I was gripped by all of them, but four in particular really spoke to me. In the story of Stan (chapter 2), I was reminded of just how difficult it was to

be dealing with adolescence and a first sexual relationship as the lockdowns of the pandemic became law. As a digital immigrant, I found Connor's explanations of the pitfalls of social media very helpful in the story of Preesha (chapter 3) and her search for a sense of self; vital reading for any therapist who is not a digital native. Likewise, Bea (chapter 8) in her use of internet dating, a chapter which also beautifully illustrates changing gender norms. And fourthly, the story of Aiden (chapter 9) struck me as a wonderful example of how to work with psychosomatic issues in brief psychodynamic work.

But this book is much more than just another collection of therapeutic stories. The process of therapy is demystified, making it an excellent choice for those wondering about approaching a therapist for the first time. For example, by the end of the first story, we know that psychodynamic therapy is about making sense of things, principally the client 'does the work', sex and death are not only legitimate topics but often key themes, and therapeutic boundaries are essential. All this is imparted tastefully, through the story, without preaching.

Likewise, relevant theory is brought in with a lightness of touch, making this an ideal first text for students of psychotherapy. For example, the story of Preesha explains transference; the story of Keziah (chapter 5) illustrates the process of rupture and repair; that of Morgan (chapter 7) raises ethical questions, and Connor uses Bea to make a distinction

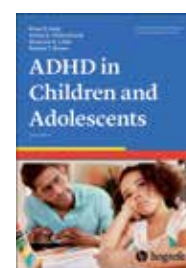
between psychodynamic and person-centred approaches. Indeed, every chapter gives us something extra – returning to a therapist (chapter 4), the dynamics of groups (chapter 5), dream work (chapter 6), and the significance of the first session (chapter 9) – to name but a few. These asides are carefully sculpted, fed to us a bit at a time, in manageable chunks, like the 'good enough' mother who the author describes.

My sense is that Connor knows her readers well, which of course, as editor of this journal, she does! She has used that experience alongside her extensive client work to give us a really nourishing feed. I highly recommend this book.

Jane Cooper is a former senior counsellor in higher education

ADHD in Children and Adolescents (2nd edition)

Brian P Daly, Aimee K Holdenbrand,
Shannon G Litke, Ronald T Brown
Hogrefe 2023
ISBN 978-0889376007



One of the hot topics of the moment, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), is explained in depth in this book. While, as therapists, we don't expect to be able to diagnose this condition,

it is helpful to understand the landscape that many of our clients are in. Part of the *Advances in Psychotherapy – Evidence-Based Practice* series, this useful book gives practitioners an overview of scientific literature covering paediatrics, psychiatry, neurology and psychology of ADHD, in a reader-friendly manner.

The first section covers the characteristics of ADHD, starting with the DSM-5 and ICD-10 diagnostic criteria. There is a useful explanation of how symptoms overlap with other psychiatric, emotional and developmental disorders, as well as conditions which look like ADHD but might not be. This section ends with some information about the various diagnostic assessments and interviews. Readers in the UK should bear in mind, however, that this book is written by American clinicians, so this information is more specific to the USA.

The second section covers 'Theories and models of ADHD in children', looking at what might cause ADHD, such as genetic contributions or environmental factors, and how different causations interrelate.

'Diagnosis and treatment indications' are listed in section 3, providing more information about clinical interviews and testing. Section 4 looks at treatment for ADHD, with information about psychopharmacology – again, bear in mind that the brand names included here are those used in the USA. There is a brief section which looks at psychosocial and behavioural therapies, which suggests that behavioural techniques have been found to be very effective in the treatment of ADHD, both in terms of support for the child/adolescent, parenting techniques, and classroom management strategies. Section five uses some vignettes which bring the theoretical sections to life.

The book is a compact 'how-to' reference guide, for use by clinicians, and would also be an ideal educational resource for students. Its brevity means that it doesn't go into detail on therapeutic strategies and techniques, however, as a therapist, with so many young clients who have either been diagnosed with ADHD or are on the waitlist for assessment, it is helpful to have a resource which gives detailed information about the condition, and how it is assessed and treated. The partner book *ADHD in Adults* would no doubt be of benefit to therapists working with that demographic.

Mel Kinross is a counsellor and supervisor

Young Lives, Big Ambitions: transforming life chances for vulnerable children and teens

Anne Longfield

Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2024
ISBN 978-1839972805



I approached this book as a school counsellor, and also as a mother of older teenage sons. The message is hard-hitting, and contains powerful and uncomfortable truths from the outset. Longfield starts by outlining some of the many challenges and

dangers facing young people today, by telling us of the deaths of Jaden and Jacob by murder and suicide, highlighting the systemic failures surrounding these tragic events. Her book describes how the gradual erosion of state support, followed by the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to a perfect storm, placing so many young people at risk of drug culture, grooming, gang involvement, general neglect, poor mental health and much more.

As a school counsellor, the author drew my attention to the importance of systemic support, and how a general lack of resources in external services gives rise to pessimism that negatively impacts the safeguarding decisions made by school counsellors and pastoral staff. Her visionary and impassioned pleas for a culture of greater support have inspired me to think more proactively when negotiating safeguarding support outside the therapy room.

In the chapter 'Out of school and into harm', Longfield highlights failures to provide appropriate early intervention that all too frequently lead to school exclusion. She highlights the pressures placed on schools to achieve high academic results that underpins the dubious practice of 'off-rolling' (the removal of a child from the school register without a formal exclusion). Speaking passionately, she describes how children outside the safe school environment may seek belonging in inappropriate or dangerous settings, such as gangs, or become easy targets for grooming, and advocates remedial inclusion via proactive individualised support. Here, I felt she might also have offered more on Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) – a wide-reaching phenomenon

post-pandemic. Longfield also neglects to mention the rise in elective home education since the pandemic. I am aware of many parents who successfully and expertly navigate this path to educate their children, and have some personal experience of the incredible, although informal, support within the home education community.

Previously England's Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield proposes a strategic solution that is unapologetically ambitious and rigorously researched. She proposes that community-based, wrap-around support should be widely available for all families in need. She offers insightful and optimistic examples of projects around the country, thinking innovatively and working tirelessly to make this possible – schools that open from dawn until dusk to provide a safe haven in deprived areas; schools calling their reception area 'the front room' to encourage parents to engage socially, feel welcome and come forward for help. Reading of the many small projects answering so earnestly the needs of their young people was heart-warming and inspired hope. I agree wholeheartedly with the author that, 'What happens to young people affects us all' (pp190), and that the false economy of cutting back on support services, such as Sure Start, pushes problems down the line, costing more in the long run. The largest cost of all is to society and the future that lies ahead for us all. How much brighter this may be if we invested in families as the crucible where larger society begins.

Bridget McConnell, school counsellor, supervisor and counselling lecturer

See p06 for our featured article **Young lives, big ambitions** in which editor Jeanine Connor is in conversation with author Anne Longfield.

Forthcoming editorial deadlines for BACP Children, Young People & Families journal:

9 September for the December issue
2 December for the March issue
10 March for the June issue