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Review: Families & Change: Coping With Stressful Events and Transitions

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Title: *Families & Change: Coping With Stressful Events and Transitions, Fourth Edition*

Editors: Sharon J. Price, Christine A. Price and Patrick C. McKenry

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“The end of the family is near,” or so goes the mainstream media’s version of a story related by many for years. In *Families & Change: Coping With Stressful Events and Transitions*, edited by Sharon J. Price, Christine A. Price and Patrick C. McKenry, a different story unfolds. The family is certainly under stress and sometimes in crisis, but is coping with it, for the most part. This edited volume in its fourth edition is a statement of how the mosaic of modern families experience stress and cope with crisis by focusing on many different aspects of modern life. In working with families it is crucial that the family be enabled to define itself, and for clinicians and policy advocates to have the competency to cope with the implications. The authors are able to provide the practitioner with a wide array of current practice theory focused on the wonderful diversity of modern families.

The editors provide a conceptual overview grounded in traditional social systems theory based on early work in the area of family stress theory, done by Reuben Hill. Hill’s work (1949, 1971) set forth many notions familiar to the modern practitioner such as *social constructionism* and *family resilience*, to name but two, as to how families cope with external and internal stressors and crisis. Later formulations incorporated more ecological factors, and helped specify a sturdy model of family dynamics as regards to coping with stress and crisis. The *ABC-X* formulation specifies that events/situations, resources and perceptions mediate to determine how families are able to cope with stress. When stress overwhelms these family attributes and ability to utilize resources, the result is crisis (Price, Price & McKerny, 2010). The flexibility of the model in handling different situations and in offering multiple points of intervention underscores its resiliency and usefulness from a practice standpoint. Practitioners will find the applications useful in their treatment of families in crisis.

The chapters in an edited volume such as *Families & Change* naturally tend to vary somewhat, but the editors do a good job in making sure that clarity and cohesiveness prevail. The book does a good job in defining terms and explaining jargon such that the following discussion is clear and concise. Obvious effort was made to include discussion of

timely circumstances (military and immigrant families), cultural diversity (GLBT-headed families, Latinos and African Americans), differential abilities and economically challenged families, and the stressors and crises faced in these situations. The addition of the chapter on military families is particularly helpful and thought provoking. Information aimed at being helpful regarding interventions for specific situations or family attributes is just that, helpful without being overbearing. There are also quality online resources provided to the practitioner regarding specific topics covered in the separate contributions. These resources can be quite valuable to those attempting to remain on the cutting edge of knowledge in the field.

The fourth edition of *Families & Change* is a welcome addition to the literature on working with families in therapeutic settings. The gathered research and functional knowledge is most helpful to the busy professional in need of a concise primer on working with the mosaic of families presenting for help. Families are many things, but not endangered. As the title words “family” and “change” imply, change and families are an eternal constant in the human condition—sometimes in need of human intervention to help them along.

References

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