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Current Resources

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et al.: Current Resources

Review of Current Resources

Family Preservation Journal (Volume 4, Issue 1, 1999)

Family Preservation Institute, New Mexico State University

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Sells, Scott P. (1998) Treating the Tough Adolescent: A Family-Based, Step-by-Step Guide. New York: The Guilford Press.

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Treating the Tough Adolescent is about changing the behavior of adolescents who engage in a range of often extreme behavior destructive to themselves and those around them. It is a valuable book that shapes research-supported ideas into practical guidance for professionals working with families of troubled adolescents. It offers a sensible and strategic approach based on 15-step family empowerment model that operationalizes the major practice principles and tests these ideas by carefully analyzing cases from a 4-year process outcome research study. The steps are designed as guidelines that are detailed, but adaptable to different situations. The proposed model uses a family-based approach because Sells believes that changes in the family structure during adolescence have a tremendous impact on a teenager. The central focus is the alleviation of the presenting problem through a return to parental authority, which changes the structure that, according to the author, creates the behavioral problem in the first place.

The book has twelve chapters organized into four parts. **Part I** offers six basic assumptions about the causes of severe behavioral problems with the guidelines necessary to address each of these six causes and then presents a treatment model that includes 15 specific procedural steps for treating families with difficult adolescents. Actual case examples are used to highlight and clarify major points within each step of the model. **Part II** presents five key principles within the 15-step model that are essential for promoting change with the family hierarchy. **Part III** outlines specific strategies addressing special treatment issues, such as working with outside systems; single-parent families; divorce and step-family problems; and alcohol and drug-use. **Part IV** describes how the author uses process-outcome research methods to refine key theoretical concepts within the proposed model.

Treating the Tough Adolescent has a number of theoretical and practical strengths. Sells uses straightforward language and exhaustive detail to present the treatment model and it is logical, practical, considerate, and easy to follow. Numerous case examples, flow-charts, and eco-maps are provided with a road-map of procedures, techniques, themes, and therapeutic maneuvers that can be used in every day practice.

The greatest limitation of the book lies in its attempt to validate the model. Sells presents an overly detailed, chronological history of the process-outcome methodology used to construct the model. The methodology is suspect because of its acknowledged psychometric flaws. The results must be viewed with caution due to the biases used in selecting the sample of cases to be studied, which resulted in a tendency to report only favorable incidents. However, the author warns the reader that the model should be viewed as work in progress and that those using it may help refine and develop the model further by contacting him at his web page.

Treating the Tough Adolescent is geared mainly for family practitioners working with troubled adolescents. However, it is an excellent resource for any practitioner working with children and families. In addition, many parents who want help in understanding their children, or a practical guide for dealing with the problems they encounter on a day-by-day basis, would find this book both useful and enjoyable.

**Patterson, JoEllen, Lee Williams, Claudia Grauf-Grounds,
and Larry Chamow. (1998) Essential Skills in Family
Therapy: From the First Interview to Termination. New
York: The Guilford Press.**

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The profession of marriage and family therapists will be strengthened by the contribution of this comprehensive text which includes managed care, holistic and spiritual assessments, information necessary for working with families in the 1990s. Operating from a biopsychosocial framework, the two hundred and thirty-page book is written for beginning level marriage and family therapists.

In the twelve chapters, therapists will find insightful information and case illustrations pertinent to critical issues facing the client and the new practitioner. The first chapter encourages the beginning clinician by articulating the fears of both the client and the novice therapist. The authors offer three stages of therapist development. The next two chapters, two and three, talk about before and after the initial interview. Dealing with families' expectations and anxieties and the importance of the joining of the therapist with the client are emphasized as well as the handling of administrative issues, such as fee payments and client permission for videotaping and observation.

Skills in conducting assessments, developing a treatment focus, and using basic counseling skills are the major emphases for the next three chapters, four to six. Chapter four offers practical assessment summaries for batterers, battered women, abusive and nonabusive families, substance abuse, holistic, and spiritual issues. Chapter five comparatively reviews four major theories of Bowen, Minuchin, Haley, and Satir using a case vignette to illustrate the different approaches of historical, structural, process, or experiential frameworks. Working with families and children, couples, and a family member with mental illness

dominate the next three chapters, six to nine, with the last three chapters focusing on termination, resistance, and future issues like managed care.

The clearly written book has its biggest strength of being comprehensive and insightful to the many dilemmas plaguing new therapists. Although it briefly mentions the need to be culturally sensitive in a couple of the chapters, depth is lacking as to how the therapist needs to integrate the cultural knowledge into assessments and treatment planning. The book is very appropriate for beginning level graduate social work practice and marriage and family classes. It certainly is an excellent contribution to the literature.

Kagan, Sharon L. and Bernice Weissbourd, Editors. (1994)
Putting Families First — America's Family Support
Movement And The Challenge of Change. San Francisco:
Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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Sharon L. Kagan and Bernice Weissbourd, respected leaders in the early childhood education field, have contributed much to the family resource movement since its inception two decades ago. As editors of Putting Families First, they have brought the contributions of distinguished scholar-practitioners and administrators. In this extensive volume, they have clearly accomplished their goal of exploring recent changes in family support programs and analyzing the family resource movement in the U.S.

The contributors consider a range of topics, including changes in family support in settings, such as schools, child health care, social services, and criminal justice; programmatic and policy changes — and challenges — at the local, state, and federal levels; and issues of quality control, outcome evaluation, and professional education. In particular, the authors describe the changes that have taken place in service delivery as family support principles

and strategies have been embraced by established agencies and institutions. In addition, they examine the growing body of knowledge that is increasingly available to inform program decisions.

Above all, this book presents an extensive and insightful examination of the evolution and future of family support. The authors are not only knowledgeable but also able to look critically at the current state of the art and raise provocative questions in each area. Several chapters are exemplary and useful to read first, as follows. Urie Bronfenbrenner and Peter R. Neville provide an international perspective, highlighting the lack of family — supportive policies in the U.S. in comparison with international standards. Bernice Weissbourd points to the potential for building a family-supportive nation on the basis of a humanitarian value system. Kagan and Weissbourd, in the concluding chapter, look to the future and argue that "family support is an evolving, dynamic movement at the cusp of significant change" (p. 489).

This volume can certainly contribute to the process of change envisioned by the authors, as it guides interested readers not only in building on what we have learned from two decades of experimentation, practice, and dialogue — but also in looking boldly to the future. It is especially valuable as a resource for administrators, researchers, and educators. In particular, the latter could assign selected chapters to complement required texts in courses in the areas of family-based services, family preservation and child and family welfare.

**Lewis, Susan Lewis and Jeremy Lewis, Editors. (1996) The Work-Family Challenge – Rethinking Employment.
Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Ltd.**

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The nineteen authors, whose works are presented in the series of twelve articles that comprise this publication, represent an impressive array of academic, business, and organizational experts who examine issues related to family and work role tensions. Articles are organized into three major categories that focus on (1) the contexts of reconciling employment and family-based role conflicts, (2) prevailing employment policies and practices that foster work and family role tensions, and (3) barriers related to improving the compatibility of family and work role responsibilities.

A common theme presented in the articles is the belief that contemporary work organizing patterns remain inappropriately anchored in a manufacturing oriented economic context, which traditionally requires the adult male to be employed outside the home and the adult female to function as the homemaker and primary child care provider. The changing nature of work within a growing globally, service-oriented economy produces economic, socio-political and psychological impacts on family units which are undergoing profound structural changes. A global economy, for example, requires greater work productivity, product quality, and the need for a flexible labor force, along with rapid responses to new technologies and changing markets. The changing nature of work-family tensions is further exacerbated by the growing need for both adults to be employed and to simultaneously care for dependent children and parents as their life expectancy increases.

Within broad international, national, socio-political, legislative, and economic contexts, this publication provides an excellent, introductory overview of relationships between workplace organization, policies and practices, and family role responsibilities of labor force members. The presentation of dominant European and U.S. employment and work organization practices provide a broad perspective on employment and family role tensions and the range

of change strategies needed to improve work-family compatibility. Changes in the beliefs, values and norms that comprise organizational cultures and the work structures that flow from these values, the authors argue, must be adapted to better reflect the actual characteristics of contemporary work force members. A combination of theoretical and case studies enables readers to examine the need for mutually beneficial reciprocity between employers and their employees which can result in improved organizational effectiveness, while simultaneously providing opportunities for employees to meet family and civic role responsibilities.

The broad theoretical overview of family and work role compatibility results in leaving the reader with a lack of practical approaches that have actually been applied and evaluated in contemporary organizations that have strived to become more family-friendly. The strategies and corporate examples that are provided present a useful theoretical overview, but lack specifics suitable for replication of business practices and personnel policies. Examples of very practical ways that have actually improved the family-friendliness of the employing organizations are needed. The reader does acquire from this publication, however, a thorough and comparative overview of issues, needs and trends related to work-family role conflicts. Consequently, the publication provides a basic conceptual examination of the major issues inherent in reconciling work organization personnel practices and policies with family-based role responsibilities of a work force. Actual change-oriented strategies and tactics designed to improve the compatibility of these interrelationships must be obtained elsewhere.



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