

- Barbara regrets events on her fortieth birthday, so she is going to give herself a fortieth birthday party on an unbirthday date.
- Betty harbors bad feelings about the way she was fired from her job, so her support group is going to role-play a job termination that is respectful. Betty will indicate what she wants to have happen.

The book ought to have included more positive information about parenting. References to parenting styles from diverse regions, ethnocultural groups, and types of families also would have enriched this text. Although limited in scope, this collection may serve the needs of readers who are trying to understand the range of parenting styles that exist.

The Therapist's Notebook for Families

Bob Bertolino and Gary Schultheis
Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 2002

Reviewed by Justyna Szachowicz-Sempruch

In a crystal ball, record your vision of the future and what you have done to solve your problems. Put into a time capsule five ideas that will move you toward the future that you envision.

The “crystal ball” and “time machine” are two of the many exercises available in *The Therapist's Notebook for Families*, a carefully drafted collection of tasks for working with parents, children, and adolescents. In this book, Bob Bertolino and Gary Schultheis offer an interesting insight into family therapy: successful therapy has less to do with technique and more to do with personal factors and relationships between therapists and patients. According to the authors, therapy is meant to promote health and well-being. While reading this book, I thought of the many times I sought to solve problems but was unable to see beyond them. This book is effective in providing different strategies to help clinicians, parents, and children feel acknowledged, validated, and to effect the change they desire.

Raising children and adolescents can cause parents to doubt and blame themselves at times of difficulty. This book suggests that recovering from difficulties is an extremely important relationship skill. What matters is not that parents and children differ in significant ways but how they cope with their differences. The proposed solution-oriented exercises are designed to remind individuals of what they value and what they do well as parents or caregivers. The exercises are organized into sections intended to help family members and therapists in scaling their goals, clarifying preferred outcomes, and identifying best ways to generate solutions, augment change, and establish alliances: “What qualities do you look for in a therapist?”; “Are there other things that you

think we should be discussing instead?”; “Is there anything I should be doing differently?” The psychoanalytical treatment, as we learn from *The Therapist’s Notebook*, is a client-informed enterprise, a suggestive collaboration designed to soften hostility. Sometimes therapy is a matter of listening to clients express their ideas and emphasize their strengths.

Bertolino and Schultheis also explore alternatives if solutions are not available: “if we offer an exercise and a parent does not believe in going home and trying it, then we would shift our approach.” Family members may “have great ideas and we ought to attend to their voices whenever possible.” In formulating such approaches, the authors suggest that words as pervasive as “always,” “never,” “nobody,” or “all the time” imply that problems stay with us forever and give us little incentive to change negative behaviour. Focused qualifiers, such as “recently,” “in the last while,” and “in the past month,” however, suggest that problems are temporary. Thus, rather than fixing our attention on problems, the book cleverly refocuses on positive changes in our families. We learn to write down the various things that help us recharge our batteries, to notice when children engage in behaviours that meet our approval, and to acknowledge others’ points of view. Acknowledgement also means, as the authors suggest, that we pay attention to the words used by others to identify patterns that maintain problems. It is necessary to explore the patterns surrounding problems – a small change is often all that is needed to break unhelpful patterns. In fact, small changes are necessary, since these lead to further changes and solutions soon appear on the horizon. When they identify interim solutions, clients notice that they are making progress and further change occurs. This is an important therapeutic stage since often we become frustrated, anxious, or disinterested if we do not recognize progress.

The authors teach us to regard experiences as learning opportunities. If you knew that the world was to end tomorrow, what are three things you would do? What was the most meaningful thing you did in the past? What could you do in the nearest future that would move you toward becoming who you want to be? This is a change-promoting book: it helps identify the context of a problem and to sustain change once it has been achieved.

Psychological Trauma and the Developing Brain

Phyllis T. Stein and Joshua Kendall
Binghamton, NY: HMTP Press, 2004

Reviewed by Channa Verbian

In *Psychological Trauma and the Developing Brain*, Phyllis Stein and Joshua Kendall study the intimate connection between experience and genetics in understanding and treating the effects of trauma on children. The authors