People with Dementia Speak Out

Several books about the experiences of people with dementia have been published recently, but this one offers a fresh perspective.

A collection of personal accounts of life before and after diagnosis, it is also an anthology of experience and a handbook for professionals who work with people with dementia.

The personal stories are quoted verbatim, which gives them authenticity and uniqueness, with many conveying a sense of triumph and hope.

The author recognises that the accounts may be unrepresentative of the wider population with dementia, but rather than detract from the value of her work, this highlights the diversity of those affected – in fact they highlight the differences in how people live their lives and show that those living with dementia are individuals first and foremost.

The book also includes some interesting appendices about, for example, narrative medicine and the effect of dementia on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people.

There are also comprehensive and informative sections at the back of the book about further reading, useful resources and helpful organisations, as well as a glossary and a set of frequently asked questions.

This is essential reading for nurses and other professionals involved in dementia care in any setting.

Lucy Whitman (Ed) | Jessica Kingsley

Sue Paxton is an independent trainer and consultant in health and social care

Compassionate Communities: Case Studies from Britain and Europe

The editors of this book define compassionate communities as those that support people with life-limiting illnesses and end of life care needs. These communities are founded on the social and public health principle that palliative and end of life care is everyone’s business.

Each chapter details the approaches and effort required to create these communities, as well as the problems that must be overcome.

The book sets out case studies from across Europe to illustrate the feasibility of compassionate communities as social practices, rather than as ‘idealistic, romantic or sentimental constructions’.

The case studies share practical experiences and reflections to develop the knowledge of those who want to create compassionate communities, and to support those already involved in them.

There is supplementary information and a detailed preface providing an overview of each chapter, all of which sets the scene for the rest of the book.

This text is aimed at academics, practitioners and policymakers in associated fields; nurses studying at undergraduate or master’s degree level, for example, and those in practitioner and policy roles, will find sections of interest. I would recommend this book is bought by hospitals or academic libraries rather than individuals.

Klaus Wegleitner, Katharina Heimerl and Allan Kellehear (Eds) | Routledge | £95 | 222pp
ISBN: 9781138832794

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Motivational Interviewing in Nutrition and Fitness

Recommending people make changes to their diet and exercise is not a straightforward task for nurses and, if handled badly, can lead to resistance.

This well written book aims to help professionals to engage people in changing their diet and improving their fitness. It outlines one-to-one communication techniques drawn from motivational interviewing (MI), a gentle, guiding style of counselling, effective across many healthcare areas.

The explanation on how to help individuals become an ‘expert’ on themselves, instead of giving them our professional advice in the hope this will encourage them to change, will be a revelation to staff who are new to MI. Nurses are shown how conversations can be applied to clinical situations through the extensive use of client-professional scenarios and detailed case studies. For example, how to begin a challenging conversation about nutrition or fitness and assess a person’s interest in changing and exploring any barriers, are extensively described.

Nurses with more experience of counselling will also find the book useful as it shows how to develop good relationships and deepen client rapport by using advanced empathy and clarification.

For health professionals who need to help people change their lifestyle, diet or fitness in an effective and sustained way, I highly recommend this book.

 Reviewed by Jennifer Percival, counsellor and RCN trainer