settings as both a source of evidence and insight together with practical advice on how to help. It is also very useful for mental health staff as 85 per cent of adult self-harm begins during adolescence. Helping people therefore often consists of making sense of the self-harm and its origins.

Dr Mike Smith

The dramatic title of this book made me suspect I would not like it and the hearty style of writing was not initially attractive. However, the direct language and frequent use of pictures and diagrams made this an easy read.

To my surprise it contains a succinct and lucid description of depression, from both an experiential and an objective point of view. The neuro-physiological basis of depression is also outlined simply, with the aid of diagrams, leading to a convincing account of the means by which antidepressants work. I often tell patients that depression is like a broken leg and antidepressants are like the plaster – though they do not cure, they do stop most of the pain and prevent more damage being caused while healing takes place. I had never read this analogy anywhere else until finding it here.

Some things in the book did jar, however, such as listing famous people who have suffered from depression – all ten were men, not one woman. Also, jarring was the remark that ‘you have no option but to soldier on; the school fees and the mortgage have to be paid’. Clearly the author’s target audience is wealthy men!

The book is remarkable in its wide scope, bringing together in a single volume many of the worlds leading figures in the field. The result is an accessible and essential resource not only for clinicians working directly in this area but also for other healthcare professionals and lay people with an interest.

Richard Benson

Bronwen Davies

28 mental health practice september 2006 vol 10 no 1