meaning of no? It’s only a little word. I just wondered what part you didn’t understand.’ Others, with threats: ‘If you keep shouting, I’m going to have you jabbed.’

There was an absolute lack of balance and serious ethical concerns emerged. Despite masking the faces of both patients and staff, you could have easily identified anyone known to you, so the privacy of vulnerable people was ignored. And who knows what was left out in the editing suite? There were no portrayals of the thousands of times mental health nurses act with care, sensitivity, skill and even bravery. There were no accounts of the many positive initiatives being undertaken to improve our wards.

But whether by accident or design, all of what was shown in this disturbing programme mirrored the concerns and complaints about acute psychiatric care detailed in a long succession of reports published over the last ten or more years.

What is perhaps more disturbing is the almost total lack of public, media or political response to this story. No-one cares.

Dr Alan Simpson

Margaret Zengeni

From 1 to 2 per cent of the UK population has obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Despite this, there are few books that describe the experience of living with this condition. With a foreword by Isobel Heyman, an international authority on childhood OCD, this book is written in an informal and accessible manner.

The book is written and illustrated by Joe, a teenager who talks openly about what it is like to live with OCD. Joe reckons that much of what has been written about OCD is full of medical jargon, so this book has had all the medical jargon trimmed off. Joe points out that we don’t need it.

Two chapters that are particularly good are called: ‘am I going mad?’ and ‘learning to walk the walk’. The first is important because it illustrates how poorly understood OCD is, and the second offers young people practical ways of coping with this disorder.

This book is not a heavy read. Joe manages to inject humour into talking about what can often be a very frightening and upsetting experience. This will be an inspiration to those who are caught up in the cycle of OCD. Joe offers practical advice to cope with worrying, rituals and routines. This will be enormously important for young people who may be confused about their obsessions, trapped in a pattern of worrying or upsetting thoughts, or those who carry out their compulsions in secret.

Nurses and other professionals who work in child and adolescent mental health services should buy this book. So should parents and carers as well as young people, themselves, who are also likely to benefit from Joe’s insights.

Touch and Go Joe: an adolescent’s experience of OCD
Author: Joe Wells
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley
No of pages: 128
Price: £9.99
ISBN: 1843103915

The concept of social capital intrigued me when I began to read this book. Primarily, my sense of mystery was buried within the questions, what on earth is social capital, and how may it be construed to have an impact upon mental health and illness?

The principle of social capital, put naively, extends way beyond social interaction, which, in measures of mental health, is often used to appraise things such as social activity and quality of life. This theory looks at the quality and nature of this interaction, good and bad, and its impact on the individual and, ecologically, on communities. This book has an international perspective on the widening social capital of communities and its impact on mental health considering the varying social capital in Europe, the Americas and Africa.

In a British society that alienates minorities more and more through stigma, this book is of specific interest to mental health workers and people who are deemed to be mentally unwell, in understanding one of the many agents that contribute toward the experience of illness when applied to the psyche.

The last chapter pulls together the discussions within the book and highlights the limitations of today’s knowledge in psychiatry about social capital and the many questions that the studies are raising, rather than questions they are answering.

I enjoyed this book, it was well constructed and unusually interesting for a theoretical and philosophical discussion, rooted in research of such a potentially abstract concept. Being occasionally lazy, I also liked the author’s consideration of the limitations of the studies presented and the summaries of the research about the area. I now feel I have a better explanation for myself, for some of the many reasons why recovery rates from schizophrenia are so much higher in Africa than in Europe.

Dr Mike Smith

Tim McDougall

Social Capital and Mental Health
Author: Kwame McKenzie and Trudy Harpham
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley
No of pages: 160
Price: £25
ISBN: 1843103559

This book focuses on children and adults who have survived one or more traumatic experiences and describes the various methods of healing used by creative and expressive therapists that have been found to be effective in such cases. It begins with the neurobiological effects of trauma, followed by an account of the different types of trauma. Other chapters describe techniques drawn from diverse fields such as art, drama, puppetry, sand play and video play therapy.

It outlines issues important in trauma treatment generally, such as being aware of the developmental context, timing and dealing with the expectations of trauma and illustrates these with detailed clinical examples. Chapters such as ‘Puppetry interventions for traumatised clients’ and ‘Video play therapy’ give clear outlines of how these methods can be adapted for use.
The last chapter ‘The bowl of light: A story-craft for healing’ describes an interesting method that was developed in the community in response to Hurricane Iniki, which struck an island in Hawaii in September 1992. It ends with a beautiful and touching quote when describing negative events in relation to this method:

‘But what Grandma Kame’ekua tells us is that all the child needs to do is to turn the bowl upside down and empty the stones and the light will grow once more….Yes, the light is always there’.

This book has some wonderful descriptions and ideas on therapeutic work with trauma survivors. It is possible that some of these methods could be adapted and used effectively by professionals from allied disciplines such as nursing. However, there is only a limited evidence base to support such interventions; the examples being mainly clinical anecdotes. This would be a useful book to be stocked in libraries rather than purchased for individual use.

Dr Madi Acharya-Baskerville

Risk and Nursing Practice

Editor: Paul Godin
Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan
No of pages: 240
Price: £18.99
ISBN: 1403943117

The last chapter ‘The bowl of light: A story-craft for healing’ describes an interesting method that was developed in the community in response to Hurricane Iniki, which struck an island in Hawaii in September 1992. It ends with a beautiful and touching quote when describing negative events in relation to this method:

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Dr Madi Acharya-Baskerville

Zone of the Interior

Author: Clancy Sigal
Publisher: Pomona Books, Hebden Bridge
Price: £9.99
ISBN: 1904590101

The publishing of this novel was a milestone, considering it was ‘blacklisted’ for almost 30 years. Sigal had come to England from America in the 1960s, a young, troubled, writer who was depressed and experiencing writer's block. He soon found himself in therapy with none other than RD Laing, England’s lead advocate of radical psychiatry. Fairly quickly, Sigal moved into the inner circles of Laing, becoming part of the organising force experiencing everything from Laing’s Kingsley Hall, in London, to David Cooper’s (in)famous creation, Villa 21, at Shenley Hospital, the latter a therapeutic community for people with (so called) schizophrenia.

There is already an account of the Villa (Clarke 2004) based on some original, but mostly secondary, sources. However, if you want the low-down on what may have happened there, then you must read Zone of the Interior within which the Villa is now transformed to Connolly or, for short, Con House. I say ‘may’ because this is a novel in whose pages there walks the sensational Dr Willie Last (will he last, get it?), a man with an uncanny resemblance to RD Laing. In fact, Sigal leaves no-one out of the frame or, perhaps more accurately, spares no-one and on its publication in 1976 Laing immediately threatened legal action.

The book disappeared from Britain although, no doubt, the odd copy made its way across the Atlantic.

This is a revitalising read, its style described as ‘free form’, elegiac, and with a sardonic humour aimed at the outlawish claims of a drug-fuelled, audacious but concerted psychiatry.

Reference


Dr Liam Clarke

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