

Book Reviews

Laraine Toms & Jan Levitt

POSITIVE PARENTING — A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

(Melbourne: Penguin, 1985; reprinted 1987, 289pp. \$12.95pb)

Positive parenting uses a question and answer approach to provide parents with an understanding of Australian primary school aged children, their problems and strategies for handling these problems. While reading as a "recipe-type" approach, that is, "tell me what the problem is and I'll advise you on how to deal with it", the book does offer suggestions which parents can use to build positive relationships with children. However, the authors have placed the onus for the child's behaviour firmly at the feet of the parents by stating that it is the way in which parents respond to behaviour which will determine whether the behaviour will continue, stop or change. This approach gives parents an active role in modifying their children's behaviour but at the same time emphasises the parents' role for the success or failure in producing change. This philosophy appears to be contradictory to the acknowledgement that parenting in the 80s is difficult and that needing outside help with parenting is not so much an admission of failure but a statement about the complexities of the role.

The authors take an eclectic approach to parenting and do not discuss the theoretical sources of the

suggested management techniques. The emphasis for handling many of the incidents appears to have a behavioural basis which is inconsistent with the statement that positive parenting is a "responsible democratic approach to child rearing". However, it is stated that the ideas and strategies are based upon well-established principles that have been used in the authors' roles as counsellors, teachers and parents.

The book has two strengths to help parents develop positive relationships with their children. First, the authors argue that the basis of successful parenting and family relationships is communication and they draw on the work of Thomas Gordon (*Parent Effectiveness Training*) and Dinkmeyer and McKay (*Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*) to provide concrete steps for enhancing communication skills. Second, parents are advised to focus on and deal directly with the behaviour as it occurs rather than looking for reasons behind it.

The content has been broken up into a number of sections (Your Child in the Family, Your Child at School, Your Child as an Individual, Sex and Sexuality and Your Child, Separation, Divorce and

the Blended Family) and addresses problems specific to each area. Suggested reading for follow-up have been included at the end of some topics; for example, Discipline and Obedience, Adoption, Death, Sex, Separation and Divorce. The resources specified were found only in Sydney which will not meet the needs of a national audience.

It was irritating to find specific pieces of research referred to in the text without a bibliographic citation which would enable readers to pursue their interest, for example, the research on privacy (p. 80), television (p. 91) and death (p. 185).

Overall, the book presents, in a concise and readable form, many helpful ideas and easy to implement strategies. Many parents will find this "trouble shooting manual" a valuable resource for advice on ways to deal with a variety of incidents and situations in ways which should enhance their relationship with their child.

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J. Krivanek

HEROIN — MYTHS AND REALITY

(Allen & Unwin, Australia, 1988, \$16.95pb)

The appearance of two books by the same author in the same year on the very controversial themes of addictions and the drug heroin is a credit to the Australian author Dr. Jara Krivanek who, at the time of publication of the books, was the Director of Clinical Drug Dependence Studies at Macquarie University in New South Wales.

These books have appeared at a very crucial time in the history of societal concern about drug use in Australia. The 1985 launch of a \$100 million campaign against drug abuse (National Campaign Against Drug Abuse) and the accompanying *Drug Offensive* has brought the topic of drug use into the households of Australia through mass media campaigns and the like. What to do about the ever expanding demands for drugs of all kinds (alcohol, prescription drugs and the illicit drugs) has exercised the minds of politicians, law enforcement agencies, teachers, child-care workers and many others. The appearance of two distinctly Australian books is very welcome at this point of time.

The author writes for the general reader. These are not textbooks for the specialised student seeking out pharmaceutical facts or demographic statistics. Both books focus on the way society has generated perceptions of drugs and drug users especially the role of the media and the law-makers.

The first chapter in *Heroin — Myths and Reality* immediately launches into an analysis of the way the media has promoted our images of the drug heroin especially in defining the so called "illicit drug problem".

The book then gives an excellent account of the way opiates were dealt with by legislation in Britain and the U.S.A. and the resultant outcomes. With the current spate of suggestions to change our own legislation in respect to marijuana and heroin Dr. Krivanek's overview of the international and our own local market and the effectiveness of control of supply measures is required reading by all involved in influencing public opinion.

Both books put the whole issue of addictions in perspective and they very successfully fulfill the aims set out by the author to get us to "stand back and try to look at what is really out there instead of depending on the largely mythical world of pragmatism, prejudice, compromise, ignorance, decency, expediency and wishful thinking."

"Addictions" take us through a number of models which have been promoted to explain the phenomenon of addiction. Dr. Krivanek's analysis of the popular "medical" model is balanced and does not aim to dismiss the valuable role the medical profession should play in the area of treatment even though competing models are coming to the fore.

ADDICTIONS

(Allen & Unwin, Australia, 1988. Length: 147pp. \$14.95pb)

The sections in this book on Giving Up Heroin and Managing the Addict and The Treatment Dilemma will be of particular interest to child care workers who are constantly confronted with parents who need programs for the management of addiction. The book does not provide how-to-do-it recipes or even recommend the most appropriate service agencies. Rather it raises issues for the worker about the relative merits and problems associated with the numerous approaches to treatment. The evidence is outlined so that we can be the judge . . .

Both these books will be welcomed additions to the library of those concerned about the problem of drug use and the insidious menace of AIDS.

It is obvious that both these books were written before the AIDS epidemic reached its current proportions. This current epidemic is forcing us to quickly rethink our position on heroin maintenance programs, needle exchange and the like.

Dr. Krivanek places the issues in the Australian context and the clarity of the discussion will greatly enhance the search for an Australian solution to these complex problems.

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