

Stress and Mental Health in Society -Third Edition

By Dato' Dr. Tan Chee Khuan
The Art Gallery, Penang, 2005, 475 pages

This book provides an ideal introduction for the lay person to the area of psychiatry. Dato' Dr Tan attempts to present very complex aspects and ideas in the field of psychiatry very simply and with ease. He certainly has a gift of making the complicated easy to understand. As stated in the preface the book is written to educate and I believe he has succeeded. The book is also filled with poems, cartoons and artworks that make the reading even more enjoyable.

The book comprises 5 sections or parts. Part 1 is the basic theoretical stuff dealing with parent-child bonding and describes the psychological development till adolescents. A lot of questions our patients asked about bonding; the appropriateness, inadequacy, etc are answered in simple understandable terms in this part. Issues of breast feeding, sibling rivalry and changes in adolescents are also described.

Part 2 describes the next phase i.e. the love, sex and aging process. Here issues related to sexuality that has always been difficult are described together with marital disharmony and how to deal with them. Even a section on sex during pregnancy is covered. It ends with a chapter on successful aging and retirement.

Part 3 is a section I found very interesting and totally appropriate to our patients. It deals with the common sense and supernatural beliefs. Most books omit or forget this important section. Dato' Dr Tan has covered an extensive description and discussion of issues related to this from the supernatural to the more 'scientific' ESP, psychokinesis, UFO, alien abductions, religious phenomena, faith healing and

other paranormal aspects. This will help most of the patients with loads of questions regarding these issues and how they relate to theirs or their relatives' psychiatric disorders.

Part 4 is also a very appropriate section. It deals with problems of modern living. It discusses issues not much discussed elsewhere but has a strong bearing on our clients such as social status and mental health, suicides, sleep difficulties, drug abuse, gambling, exercise, dieting, fitness and even a chapter on living and dying well. Sections dealing with coping with stress and crisis intervention are also well covered here.

Finally the last part deals with the actual psychiatric disorders and challenges faced. Here he covers practically all the commonly seen psychiatric disorders in very articulate and simple to understand fashion that the lay person would find no difficulty to digest. A section on ECT is also included and so is community mental health. A chapter on life of a psychiatrist would certainly help people to understand us better and for that I thank Dato' Dr Tan.

Overall, I find this book to be a very comprehensive book covering every conceivable aspect of psychiatry for the Malaysian public. It would be a good idea for every psychiatry clinic to have one. We might find some of the explanations given by Dato' Dr Tan useful for our clients. We should recommend it to our clients.

Reviewed by:

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