

Counseling Issues: A Handbook for Counselors and Psychotherapists

George A. F. Seber

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This comprehensive professional guide suggests a personal and open approach to psychological counseling.

People who experience psychological distress manifest symptoms in ways that reflect their individual personalities, something therapists should be alert to when deciding on a treatment plan, recommends George Seber in his comprehensive reference book, *Counseling Issues: A Handbook for Counselors and Psychotherapists*.

Written to provide novice therapists with practical information about psychological conditions and counseling choices, the book is also relevant to more experienced practitioners. The introductory chapter addresses how the human brain works to affect personality traits, feelings, cognition, and changes that occur with aging. Seber continues with an overview of things that are important to the development of personal wholeness, including nutrition and exercise, resilience, self-esteem, and emotional and social influences. Subsequent chapters cover a wide range of topics, such as anxiety and compulsive disorders, depression and grief, substance and behavioral addictions, physical and mental abuse, effects of divorce on children, and blended families. A detailed table of contents, copious footnotes and references, and an index further enhance the book's usefulness.

The author concludes each chapter with biblical interpretations for use in treatment of Christian clients.

Acknowledging that some therapists might object to this approach for religious or other reasons, he cites recent studies that indicate a positive connection between spiritual practices, whatever they may be, and improved health. Overall, the biblical content is presented without pressure for readers to accept it.

After establishing a career as a professor of statistics in New Zealand, Seber trained in counseling and has been in practice for the past ten years. The author of various books on statistical information, he understands the challenge of categorizing depression as either a mood or a physical disorder. He writes, "Wearing my hat as a past professional statistician, I would point out that trying to establish various categories of depression is fraught with statistical difficulties."

Seber analyzes symptoms and risk factors and offers counseling strategies for each condition he discusses. He begins the section on treatment for suicide risk, for example, by noting that "the key aspect of counseling is the therapeutic relationship, as in times of crisis it may be the only thing that keeps a client alive." Listing some common ideas clients have about suicide that could cause them to avoid talking about it, he urges therapists to initiate open discussion, using clear and nonjudgmental language.

Seber writes intelligently about the complex aspects of psychological disorders that afflict humanity. His well-organized book presents material that can be quickly accessed and includes numerous references to Internet resources and testing options for use during the assessment and treatment processes. Unfortunately, typographical errors detract from the book's otherwise professional presentation, and the small font size may strain some readers' eyes.

Professional therapists will benefit from adding *Counseling Issues* to their reference libraries. Lay readers who seek guidance in understanding the ups and downs of their personal lives may also find the book helpful.

MARGARET CULLISON (July 10, 2013)

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