ForeWord Reviews

From Difficult to Disturbed: Understanding and Managing Dysfunctional Employees
Laurence Miller
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Mental health has been summarized as the ability to both love and to work. Books about love and psychology are legion; here is one that fills a large gap on the other front. Miller, a psychologist and management consultant, has written an unusual, perhaps unique, manual on the all-too-human side of work. Drawing on experience with corporations, law enforcement, courts, and social agencies, Miller combines authoritative confidence with frank, friendly communication.

"Preeners and Predators: Narcissistic and Anti-Social Employees" is one of twelve chapters that also cover borderline, obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, schizoid, and passive-aggressive personalities. Chapters on psychiatric, neurological, and mind-body syndromes range from mood disorders to epilepsy. Laurence is an expert on workplace violence, emphasizing prevention as well as crisis response. Psychiatric syndromes and symptoms are not easy to teach. "Dependent Personality" is a scientific label; the science has to fit real life characters and situations. With well-written vignettes Miller brings these terms to life.

Each discussion of a personality type begins with "What They're Thinking." Then comes "What They're Like," e.g., "The Histrionic Boss" and "The Histrionic Employee," for each of which there is a cogent case study. Then, a pleasant surprise: "If You are a Histrionic Personality" puts the "patient" and the manager in the same boat.

Everyone is human, none exempt from risk, none to be shamed. Educators, health professionals, and legislators will value this book, as well as managers. It is a model of conveying expert knowledge and opinion so that everyone can benefit.

E. James Lieberman