

Medicine Mind and Meaning: A Psychiatrist's Guide to Treating the Body Mind and Spirit

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Psychiatric illnesses are among today's greatest causes of morbidity and mortality. According to the National Institute for Mental Health, 75 million Americans suffer from common psychiatric illnesses, while 38 million annually seek therapy. This book covers issues that are relevant to everyone affected by health problems, including those who are suffering and those who are close to them.

The author's three-legged therapeutic approach for care of troubled individuals has attracted attention from medical, health, and spiritual authorities. A psychiatrist, Wood currently serves as a clinical associate professor of medicine at the University of Arizona's Program in Integrative Medicine.

Because she is a medical doctor, her brand of care for body, mind, and spirit is steeped in the strengths of proper diagnosis and medication. She states: "The body leg is the leg modern medicine tends to be most comfortable with; it is the leg that I learned the most about in medical school." Unfortunately, she does not address the roles of nutrition, postural integration, supplements, exercise, environment, and other physical influences on body health.

The mind-set leg is the one most therapists can relate to and is clearly a major strength of Wood's twenty years of practice. Her compassionate yet firm therapeutic style paves the way to steady progress. Psychoanalysts, cognitive therapists, behaviorists, and self-help enthusiasts will be at home with her engaging approach, which considers mind-sets and attitudes, and works to identify family-of-origin issues. Significant questions inspire the reader to get the most out of the patient stories and examples. As the anecdotes unfold, specific illnesses are clarified. Then affirmation exercises encourage constructive lessons that encourage individual voices to express their best selves. Religious and spiritual factors are also shown to reduce risk of developing major depression, and to quicken recovery.

A culminating section brings all the pieces together, glued with sustaining hope that good health is possible, no matter how long the process of change. Staying the course takes diligence and, in truth, money to work with professionals. However, this particular worthy effort provides excellent tools and insights for right action.

The appendix alone is a tremendous contribution, defining specific disorders, describing symptoms and causes, evaluating diagnosis, and suggesting treatment. Also included is accessible information for identifiable mental health concerns and where to constructively seek help. Many can benefit from this pragmatic medical look into mind and meaningful support.

SOPHIA TARILA (September / October 2004)

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