

Psychology Made Easy

Chuck Falcon

Sensible Psychology Press (February 2000)

\$25.00 (553pp)

978-0-9628254-1-5

The premise of this book seems deceptively simple: a knowledge of basic life skills combined with good advice (both of which the book promises to impart) will enable people to conquer their personal problems through self-initiated change. Author Chuck Falcon admits that old habits are hard to break, but he believes that “by following the advice in this book, most people, even those with serious problems, can change and improve themselves without counseling.” It is a tall order.

The book’s attempt at comprehensiveness ultimately short-changes the many subjects covered. Its three sections—“General Information and Advice”, “How To Solve Personal Problems” and “Conclusion”—include chapters ranging anywhere from sex to job-hunting skills. Because the author has undertaken what he terms “the whole range of personal problems,” he summarizes a lot of information, but a great deal of the book sounded like just plain horse sense, e.g., “problem solve in a calm and relaxed manner.” In fact, the best parts are the lists, questions and exercises someone can actually put into practice such as the reward system charts in the child-rearing section. Also helpful are the recommended books and/or support groups and hotlines at the end of each chapter as well as an up-to-date bibliography. There are no footnotes, however, and sources for information are not always listed within the text.

This book is best used as a practical reference guide by counselors and self-motivated people or as a text for a high school life skills course, especially the chapters on couples, teen pregnancy and marriage. Falcon’s unadorned style wearies one after awhile, especially in his penchant for piling up words at the end of a sentence: “People tend to believe events make them feel happy, sad, depressed, angry, upset, etc.” Also, the tone of the book varies from chapter to chapter, consistent with its desire to be all things to all people.

A psychologist himself, the author concedes that some people benefit from therapy because of the “attention...encouragement...emotional support” the interaction may bring. Often people need more than a book to help them change. Maybe that’s why the most convincing chapter is “Raising Children” since behavior therapy works best on minds not yet made rigid by years of bad habits.

JUDY HOPKINS (January / February 1999)

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