Clarion Review

Self-Help

Take Charge of Your Life: How to Get What You Need with Choice-Theory Psychology
William Glasser
iUniverse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Psychiatrist William Glasser offers insight into why we make the choices we make in his helpful book, *Take Charge of Your Life*.

The author has pioneered the "choice theory" approach, which he makes available through the William Glasser Institute and his more than twenty books. Glasser describes choice theory as "a new psychology based on the fact that we choose all we do, and the only person's behavior we can control is our own." He contends using this approach can bring individual happiness and enhance human connections.

Many examples of the ways people are essentially choosing their own misery illustrate Glasser's argument: the executive who quietly suffers the daily harassment of a tyrannical boss; the wife who continually tries to guilt her alcoholic husband into changing his ways; the teenager who distances himself from his family by taking drugs or acting out. Many parents will find Glasser's insight into effective parenting particularly helpful and informative. In all examples, he points out the futility of trying to change others, and the necessity of learning to control one's own actions and reactions.

Take Charge of Your Life is pleasingly presented, with a simple but effective cover and opening pages consisting of accolades for Glasser and his work as well as a supportive foreword from an admiring colleague. Well written and fairly free of editorial error, the seventeen chapters are comprehensive in scope and cover nearly every scenario to which the choice theory approach could be applied. While the structure of the chapters—primarily large chunks of unrelieved text—may prove daunting for readers who are more accustomed to short, unembellished statements, Glasser generally makes up for it by packing such sections with interesting and applicable information.

Glasser suggests that "we choose most of the misery that we suffer." Depression and

other ailments, in his view, are decisions based on taking control of situations. People are not clinically depressed; they are “depressing” themselves. By the same token, using guilt to try to control is called “guilting,” and suffering migraines is “headaching.” Glasser does not negate the reality of the condition itself but rather asks his readers to consider their ultimate cause, likely a grasp for control of what may appear to be uncontrollable outside influences. He suggests that once one makes the choice to take responsibility, many such problems will be alleviated.

Some of Glasser’s assertions are bound to be controversial, particularly his view that, in many cases, people choose to be sick and that those with chronic pain are often “paining” in response to a particular issue in their lives. In speaking of cancer, Glasser recognizes its seriousness while suggesting that at least some of the time, outcomes can likely be affected, either positively or negatively, by the patient’s attitude.

Take Charge of Your Life urges readers to stop blaming and start accepting responsibility for choices and circumstances. Nearly everyone who chooses to open the book will benefit from some of the positive and encouraging insights available in its pages.

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