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PSYCHOLOGY

The Healthy Personality: Eight Skills You Need
John P. Kildahl
CreateSpace
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Four Stars (out of Five)

John Kildahl, author of *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (1972) and coauthor of two other books, writes that he intended *The Healthy Personality* to be "a handbook, a reference book, a textbook, something readable in a hammock, or to help someone who was leaning over the desk looking for a quote for a term paper." The reader will find the book neither intimidating nor too technical a study; on the contrary, *The Healthy Personality* offers authoritative advice in everyday terms.

Kildahl identifies eight skills he believes one needs to develop a healthy personality: relationships, independence, reality, thinking, impulse control, defenses, relaxation, and balance. He devotes one chapter to each skill and includes a varying amount of detail. In the chapter "Relationships," for example, Kildahl traces relationships as far back as infancy. He discusses parenting, covers the "four levels of intensity" in relationships, explores the nature of friendships, introduces the subject of sex in relationships, explains how to "picture the positive," and emphasizes the importance of gratitude. In contrast, the chapter "Impulse Control" is a mere five pages long. With the content just scratching the surface, it seems as if this particular skill may have been somewhat shortchanged.

Despite these inconsistencies, readers are sure to find Kildahl's discussion of the eight skills to be of interest. In every chapter, the author includes one or more examples, scenarios, or vignettes to add relevance to the topic. In "Independence: Reason and Strength," for example, the author offers a synopsis of Graham Greene's story "The End of the Party" to illustrate the extreme fear and lack of independence of Francis, an adolescent boy.

Kildahl's prose is straightforward and sprinkled with a good dose of common sense. For instance, in the chart "What To Do, How To Do It" appearing in the "Reality" chapter, Kildahl offers "some nostrums to add reality to one's life." Some of these include "Sucking up to others: Does not work in the long run," "When things go wrong: Learn from them," and "Worrying: Alter it to 'problem solving.'"

At the end of the book, Kildahl includes a bibliography and several useful tools, the most helpful of which is a personality quiz readers can take to determine at which level they score for each of the eight skills.

There are a few imperfections in this book. There are times, for example, when the author seems to ramble. And, every so often, the reader might find that Kildahl is a bit too preachy: "Your most important personality skill, arguably, no, not even arguably, is to have friends."

On the whole, *The Healthy Personality* is entertaining and instructive. Kildahl offers clear insight into how any reader can make real personality improvements.

Barry Silverstein