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Therapy's Best: Practical Advice and Gems of Wisdom from Twenty Accomplished Counselors and Therapists

Howard G. Rosenthal
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"Careful use of language is the key to effective therapy. And note that the therapist's task is often not to take the question at face value but to change the question—as I am doing now—so it can be answered in a more life-affirming way," says Edwin Schneidman, founder of the field of suicidology, in the closing interview of this unusual book. The interviewer is the author of this book, a counselor, writer, and lecturer, who corrals quite a diverse bunch of experts for his stable, but this quote is one that most therapists will agree on. Rosenthal, whose own language is clear and down-to-earth, is able to show, through wide-ranging interviews, how the field has developed and where it may be going.

A number of other elders in the field are widely known: Raymond Corsini, Albert Ellis, Muriel James, Al Mahrer. Interspersed are interviews with counselors and therapists well-known through their current books: Robert Alberti *Your Perfect Right*); Dorothy and Ray Becvar *Family Therapy*); Bob Bertolino *Change-Oriented Therapy With Adolescents and Young Adults*); William Glasser *Choice Theory*); Francine Shapiro *EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing*). The most notable non-therapist in the group is Richard Bolles *What Color is your Parachute?*). The book is a rich mine of raw data on the history of American psychology, including self-help and the ideological climate of the last half-century. Readers who want a sophisticated overview of therapy in historical context should consult Philip Cushman's *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy.*

While this book is addressed mainly to present and future counselors and therapists, its conversational approach makes it enjoyable for a wide audience, including consumers of helping services who understand that there is no single path to glory in this broad field. The ability to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity marks the mature person and the good therapist. Rosenthal asks his panel about common mistakes, and interviews the co-editors of *Bad Therapy*, Jon Carlson and Jeffrey Cottler. Readers will encounter critiques of Dr. Phil McGraw, Wayne Dyer, Milton H. Erickson, and Sigmund Freud. They will also find praise for Erickson and Freud.

In sum, this is a sophisticated assemblage dressed in plain clothes. People will disagree with some choices Glasser is the sole psychiatrist; why not Salvador Minuchin, Leston Havens, Irvin Yalom?) but that is inevitable. This compilation supports general principles, including personal respect and attention to context, and offers tips on communicating and enhancing constructive options, but warns against rote formulas and hackneyed routines. Physician, heal thyself. Therapist, hear thyself.