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Health & Fitness

There's Always Help; There's Always Hope: An Award-Winning Psychiatrist Shows You How To Heal Your Body Mind and Spirit

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More than fifty million Americans suffer from mental illnesses—from depression to panic to eating disorders. Fear of stigmatization, shame, judgment, and misunderstanding cause many to avoid treatment. These fears, combined with horror stories of misdiagnoses, point to the dramatic need for a resource that informs consumers and enlightens medical professionals.

The author, a practicing psychiatrist and instructor, has written articles for medical publications and speaks at national workshops and conferences. She has served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, and as Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Arizona Program in Integrative Medicine.

In this book, she describes how she shares the challenges of long-term work with her patients, weaving together treatments that reflect a holistic perspective, which Wood characterizes as the three-legged stool of body, mind, and spirit. “Each time I sit with a patient, I am awed by the sanctity and majesty of the life before me,” she writes. “I am inspired by the human being who is brave enough to seek counsel during such … devastating periods.” Nurturing each person, helping each to become whole, saving each life, for Wood, grew out of an early lesson from Hebrew school: “If a person saves one life, it is as if he has saved the entire world.”

Illustrating theory with patient stories and walking readers through her sometimes unorthodox approaches, Wood exposes the inside of mental health treatment. She begins with the fourteen-year therapeutic journey of Gillie, her first patient and one of her most troubled. “I encouraged her to audiotape our … sessions and to listen to the tapes between visits,” Wood explains. “Listening to the tapes would provide her with a way to drown out the negative internal voices of her critical personalities.”

The book focuses on healing in three key areas: body (biological givens, feelings); mind

(thoughts, family models); and spirit (purpose, meaning). Wood emphasizes that all three must be addressed for complete healing. Adding to her empathetic credibility, Wood shares her own growth story. Healing is a lifetime endeavor, she asserts, and her patients acknowledge this in their stories in the final chapter.

A tantalizing mention of Chinese energy medicine raises the question of unexplored alternative therapies. Wood's assumptions about medication as a necessary part of most interventions confirms a Western medical bias. The detailed appendices alone are worth the price of the book. They cover eleven specific mental disorders with basic diagnostic questions, statistics, explanations, and potential solutions.

This book, with a foreword by C. Everett Koop, has been a winner and finalist in nine national book competitions. It offers clear writing, vivid stories, practical diagnostic tools, and reference appendices. Its holistic approach will expand the perspective of health care providers, and it's essential for consumers and health collections.

Bobbye Middendorf