

Review

A Family in Therapy

Peter McCallum and Moshe Lang (1989), Melbourne. McPhee Gribble/Penguin. 291 Pages \$14.99, paper.

This interesting and unusual book offers an illuminating account of one family's experience of therapy. Verbatim transcripts of their five sessions are accompanied by commentary from Moshe Lang as therapist and by Peter McCallum as colleague. These interpretations are instructive in permitting access to the dilemmas, risks and intuitions which inevitably guide therapeutic action. Presenting the entire sequence of interviews encourages a graphic and poignant reliving of the family's experience. There is constant oscillation in the process. In one instance, all hope vanishes as Moshe's strategies founder on the rock of inertia, only to be revived in the next, as our hearts soar at the prospect of newfound flexibility and adaptation. The reader is inevitably drawn to reflect on the process of therapy per se, while those engaged in family work will readily identify with the personal vicissitudes of the therapist.

Part Two of the book ventures beyond the transcripts' ethnographic riches to alternative explanations. Perspectives offered range from feminism, Australian history, communication style, women's studies, metaphorical language, to technical analysis. Inclusion of such disparate viewpoints further invites the reader's judgment on salient elements of both the family problem and its resolution. McCallum and Lang have avoided 'technicising' their description. This proves to be a successful measure in maintaining focus on both the family's experience and the eclectic nature of therapy itself. Features which are especially attractive are the honest acknowledgement of the therapist's vulnerability and the deliberate de-emphasis of theoretical issues.

In a market replete with competing ideologies, it is refreshing to find a book reflecting values such as respect, openness, trust and commitment to one's clients. The detailed unfolding of the therapeutic process afforded the reader by this book is, alas, too rarely available. It should therefore appeal to all who are interested in family therapy from the general reader to the experienced clinician.

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