In "Becoming an Effective Psychotherapist," the author provides clear, understandable, introductory-level explanations of nine major systems of psychotherapy: psychodynamic, behavioral, existential, person-centered, Gestalt, cognitive, systemic, feminist and constructivist. Each chapter presents the basic foundation or essence of each system, covering the main theories and associated therapeutic practices.

This book seems to be most appropriate for advanced undergraduate students studying psychology or related fields or beginning graduate students in psychology or counseling. I also think this book would be perfect for beginning psychiatry medical residents, who may have had limited coursework in psychology. In fact, I plan to use this book to help me teach a "Theories of Psychotherapy" course, which is taught in small-group format to first-year psychiatry residents. For the first two years I taught the course, I have had the goal of presenting one theory each week in an hour-long seminar. However, I have struggled to do this concisely and at times, I'm sure I have confused my students. I plan to use the chapters in this book as a starting point and a guide to tell me what to include and what to omit when presenting my material.

Psychodynamic theory is a topic that I have particular difficulty in explaining briefly and concisely. Truscott explains that "psychodynamic therapy is based on the premise that a satisfying and useful life comes from being honest with oneself." He goes on to explain that being honest with oneself is not always easy, and that we tend to hide our undesirable feelings and motives from ourselves. These feelings then become unconscious. They enter conscious awareness only in modified form or when the conscious mind is weakened, such as while sleeping. After this introduction, the reader has the basic foundation of psychoanalysis. Interestingly, the author does not explicitly discuss defense mechanisms, although he does describe the basic process of a defense mechanism without using the term. Nor does he discuss the psychosexual stages of development, which I found surprising at first. However, I think this is what makes this book so effective. The author does not endeavor to cover every detail of these theories but presents only what is necessary for the student to grasp the basic ideas behind the theories.

I also found the author's coverage of Gestalt therapy to be helpful, particularly because I have never had a good grasp of this theory. Truscott explains that, according to Gestalt
therapists, "a human being is a unified whole that cannot be reduced to a simple summation of physical, biological, psychological or conceptual properties." Distress occurs when we deny parts of our existence to ourselves, leading us to engage in self-destructive symptoms, like worrying or compulsive behavior. The goal of Gestalt therapy is awareness. Again, I think the author does a very effective job of explaining the theory on an elementary, understandable level, so that we are able to understand the rest of the theory and the therapeutic techniques or "games."

The other areas: cognitive, behavioral, person-centered, systemic, constructivist, and feminist are covered equally well. I chose to focus more on psychodynamic and Gestalt chapters because, as a cognitive-behavioral health psychologist, these are my weakest areas. Having read this book will enable me to teach these topics more effectively, focusing on the essentials while leaving out excessive details which may confuse and overwhelm beginning students.

A unique feature of this book is the learning exercises and reflective journals at the end of each chapter. These features are intended to help the reader apply and deepen their understanding of each theory of psychotherapy, in order to ultimately help them choose the approach to psychotherapy that they choose to practice. I especially liked this exercise at the end of the chapter on Person-Centered Therapy.

"Try spending a day being fully available to everyone you meet. In every encounter, whether in line at the grocery store, over the dinner table, on the telephone, or wherever you are.

1. Be truly engaged. Set aside distractions and pay attention to the other person.
2. Ask at least one question without being intrusive or judgmental that offers the other person an opportunity to go deeper into their own experience.
3. Avoid platitudes that deflect or belittle others' experiences. When you ask someone, "How are you?", for example, ask in a manner that tells them you are sincere.
4. If someone does or says something that upsets you, try being curious rather than furious. Attend to them and to your own experience with openness, acceptance, and compassion."

This is a great exercise to help students learn how to put person-centered ideas into practice, as well as to remind experienced practitioners to go back to the basics. Each chapter has an equally helpful exercise to help students get into the mindset of each theory.

Overall, I found this to be a concise and well-written introduction to the major theories of psychotherapy. Students who read this book will have a solid grounding in the basics of these theories and will be well on their way to finding the therapeutic approaches that are a good fit for them as beginning practitioners.
A Review of

**Becoming an Effective Psychotherapist: Adopting a Theory of Psychotherapy That’s Right for You and Your Client (2010)**

By Dr. Derek Truscott, R. Psych.

**Washington, DC: American Psychological Association**

ISBN: 978-1-43380-4731

Reviewed by Michelle Vandegriend, Ph.D. R. Psych.

When psychologists and other mental health professionals reflect on their training and initial launch into their profession, they often relay stories of anxiety and struggle in adopting an approach to psychotherapy that feels compatible with their own values, beliefs, and individuality. With a plethora of theories to examine one can feel overwhelmed in determining what orientation will be the best fit for them in working most successfully with clients. In the forward of the book entitled, *Becoming an Effective Psychotherapist*, Scott Miller writes, “Specifically, it uses the science of the common factors to help readers sort through the myriad therapeutic alternatives and find an approach that works best for them and their clients. Consider yourself fortunate” (p. xi). Indeed, Dr. Truscott draws on his wisdom and expertise from his years of experience as a psychologist, university professor, and author to help individuals in this field maximize their effectiveness in working with clients.

At the beginning of this text Dr. Truscott clearly describes the benefits of adopting a theory of practice. He also emphasizes the continual reflection and assimilation of a chosen theory and refining it into one’s own personal approach to psychotherapy. Using an analogy he states, “Just as a musician must be fully grounded in musical theory to be able to improvise well, so too must a psychotherapist be grounded in – without being bounded by – theory” (p. 7). As such, the first chapter focuses on adopting a theory and the last focuses on adapting your approach. The reader is encouraged to keep a reflective journal to process their thoughts and impressions of each theory.

In the first of eleven chapters, Dr. Truscott suggests identifying your worldview beginning with four major systems of psychotherapy – empiricism, rationalism, humanism, and collectivism. Major theories of psychotherapy are then presented in which important scholars, developments, goals, processes of change, significant tasks, and key features of the therapeutic relationship are described. Case examples, learning tasks, reflective journal questions, and exhibits are then presented at the conclusion of each chapter. These suggested activities bring each theory to life – they assist the reader in “trying on” the theory and in reflecting how it may or may not be congruent with their own beliefs and personality. The final chapter is key in that readers are brought to a point of consolidating a personal approach. It concludes with an exhibit titled, “Toward a Personal Approach to Practice” which entails writing a case study from your worldview and belief in your approach to psychotherapy. Dr. Truscott explains that developing and refining a personal approach plays a significant role in being responsive to the uniqueness of each client and in working toward meaningful therapeutic goals. In addition, it leads toward long-term career fulfillment.

*Becoming an Effective Psychotherapist* is a significant contribution to one’s library of resources. It serves
as an important guide in professional development, and it helps psychotherapists see all the pieces of the puzzle more clearly – ultimately encouraging the best therapeutic outcome for clients. It is especially beneficial for graduate students and individuals entering the field of psychotherapy as well as for professionals in related disciplines.

A Review of

A Life Interrupted: The Story of My Battle with Bullying and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (2011)

By Sumi Mukherjee
Publisher: ExLibris Corporation

ISBN: 978-1-4568-8080-4

Reviewed by Joan Neehall, Ph.D., R. Psych.

This delightful little autobiography is written in a simple, concise style that engages the reader in a journey through the harrowing hell of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Of significance is the pain involved in being misdiagnosed, bullied, and ostracized by peers. It is interesting how, in spite of having a mother who is a psychologist, Mukherjee’s problem remained undiscovered until later in life as a young adult. Unfortunately, as a young child, he was privy to his mother’s psychological literature, which confounded the issue, as he then became convinced he had paranoid schizophrenia. Ironically, one of his worst bullies later suicided from that disorder but only after Sumi was able to confront him and deal with his inner fears.

Several important themes are raised in this book. Perhaps the most important one is how easy it is for the disorder to be misdiagnosed by clinicians as in the painful case of Sumi. He appears to be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, perfectionistic traits, academic failure, and an inability to focus. One of the most compelling arguments the writer makes is the necessity for an accurate diagnosis so that the psychopharmacological aspects of the illness can be appropriately treated, as was the case with Sumi, but only after a painful struggle over twenty years. Themes of shame, guilt, racism, and inadequacy are painfully portrayed as we relive Sumi’s experiences in early childhood and puberty. It is only as a young adult that he is able to engage in a heterosexual relationship of significance.

The multifaceted aspects of the illness are graphically depicted through Sumi’s eyes. This book should be in every clinician’s library. It is a useful therapeutic adjunct and would be of value to school counselors as well as the general public.

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A Review of

Tattered Teddies - An Interactive Handbook About the Awareness and the Prevention of Suicide in Children (2008)

By Laurel Bridges and Rani Murji
Calgary, AB: Centre for Suicide Prevention

ISBN: 978-0-9733886-5-7

Reviewed by Melina Dayne, RN BN MSc MFT R.Psych.

Tattered Teddies is a rare handbook for its presentation, interactive approach, and information on childhood suicide prevention.

The spiral binding suggests that this is indeed a workbook – one that is used in a communicative process (i.e. the reader is to actively reflect and respond). Tabs pinpoint the nine sections, and on the cover two different kites are seen: one that is worn to shreds, stranded, having difficulty flying and the one that is intact, bright, flying high. The former represents the hazards that may invade a child’s life putting the child at risk, while the latter represents the protective factors that permit a child to thrive.

A succinct introduction launches the book and the authors present an overview of chapter themes, define the age group of children twelve and younger, and explain