

## Counselling in relationships: Insights for helping families develop healthy connections

Vicki Enns (Ed.).

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As social workers, we are involved in myriad relationships, as are those we work with. Much of our work involves developing relationships with people, alongside assisting them to navigate the complexities of their relationships with others and their wider contexts. This book provides an understanding of the challenges faced by people in numerous different relationships, with each chapter offering insight into a particular type of relationship. The types of relationships discussed include, but are not limited to, parents–teens, couples, single-parent families, immigrant and refugee families’ relationships, blended families, and foster families.

The overarching aim of the book is to provide insights for those in the helping professions, so they can support clients to develop healthier connections in their relationships. The editor, Vicki Enns, is the Clinical Director of the Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI), and each chapter is authored by either a social worker, counsellor, or a therapist. Case examples, drawn from each author’s own practice experiences, are given to demonstrate how to apply the concepts and principles being discussed. Opportunities are also presented for the reader to reflect on their own lives and practices.

There is an emphasis on being trauma-informed, alongside understanding the numerous historical and societal influences that shape people and their relationships. The authors address issues of colonisation, systemic racism, and intergenerational

trauma. They provide an understanding of the importance of identifying and unpacking these experiences to enable people to understand the enduring influence that these have on themselves and their relationships, or on those they are in relationships with. Although examples are given of encounters with individuals and families, this book highlights the need for those in the helping professions to identify the multiple layers of influence on people’s lives and how these impact on relationships.

In Chapter 1, Marion Brown emphasises the importance of identifying both micro and macro factors that are impacting on people’s relationships. This helps to ensure we do not reduce our interactions to the individual level, solely focussing on encouraging individuals to make better decisions. Rather, Brown states, “to understand someone, we need to pay attention to the history and current condition of their environment and relationships, their culture and the surrounding politics” (p. 5), thus acknowledging the numerous influences that shape individual actions.

Despite being written in the Canadian context, this book has much to offer practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapter 10 has a specific focus on indigenous insights which, although speaking to the experiences of Canadian First Nation peoples, provides relevant information applicable for working with Tangata Whenua and other indigenous peoples. In this chapter, Noela Crowe-Salazar discusses nine principles of “truth and reconciliation” and asks readers to “see with your ears

and listen with your eyes” (p. 315) when reflecting on these. The nine principles include indigenous peoples’ rights, treaty considerations and self-determination, healing relationships, and addressing the ongoing impacts of colonisation through constructive action. Crowe-Salazar concludes by asking readers to consider the steps required “to walk in reconciliation in your daily practice with individuals and families” (p. 345), something that we, as social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand, should all be doing.

This book is an easy read, with concepts that have dominated my social work degree apparent throughout. The authors emphasise the need for client-led, strengths-based, and culturally competent practice that positions individuals and families as the experts in their lives. Also highlighted is the need to practise in a way that acknowledges the diverse nature of families, their cultures, and their unique experiences. In sum, this is a relevant read for those working in the helping professions, and appropriate for the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

Reviewed by **Fleurina Gilmour**, 4th year Social Work Student The University of Waikato