

Book Reviews

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Is Transactional Analysis (TA) an effective approach in working with depression?

Mark Widdowson, PTSTA, Senior Lecturer in Counselling and Psychotherapy at Salford University in Manchester, offers his answer to this question.

Depression is one of the world's most common psychopathologies. According to the World Health Organization, its prevalence is expected to increase over the coming years.

Just one datum may serve here to understand the phenomenon, as well as the importance of offering effective and widespread psychotherapies: in 2013, in England, 53.3 million antidepressant prescriptions were issued, costing the health service £282,1 million.

Were we to consider that *“people with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to become depressed and to endure more persistent depression”*, the data just reported becomes alarming.

The social costs of depression are indeed very high, taking into account the patient's psycho-physical suffering, the impact on his/her family and the risks of developing other psychological and physical symptoms.

Thus, depression cannot be simply reduced just to a feeling of sadness. It is indeed a psychological problem which concerns also the body. It may further impact the immune system and brain, with a 75% probability of relapse. As such, it requires swift and significant resources and interventions.

Mental health professionals are thus encouraged to promote the debate within the scientific community in order to improve their knowledge about theories and techniques.

Transactional Analysis for Depression: a step by step Treatment Manual, soon to be translated and published in Italian, represents the first research-based work in TA which is dedicated entirely to depression. It provides a complete theoretical overview and a clear systematization of TA techniques in treating depression.

As affirmed by the author, the book is not a manual for passive compliance - and indeed the danger of simplification in using psychotherapy manuals is already well-recognized.

Instead, the book might better be considered as a guideline by which the psychotherapist may usefully tailor his/her own working modalities towards patients.

After introducing basic TA concepts, Widdowson highlights possible aetiologies and depressogenic processes, as well as the emotional, relational and behavioural features of depression. The latter are furtherly addressed in the chapters devoted to the different areas of therapeutic changes.

A large part of this book is dedicated to key mechanisms of change in psychotherapy with a particular focus on the phases, treatment planning and monitoring of progress. Much attention is paid to the strategies and techniques which the psychotherapist can adopt, always tailored to the specifics of each patient.

Last but not least, the most recent neuroscientific studies on depression

and psychopharmacology are illustrated.

The book deals with this topic in a comprehensive way and from multiple points of view, providing clear indications on effective TA psychotherapy for depression.

It comes as a useful instrument to include in the psychotherapists' toolbox, especially for those starting out in the profession who require clear definitions in phases and techniques.

