

## Book Reviews

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Michael H. Ebert, M.D., Editor

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### **Dissociation in Children and Adolescents: A Developmental Perspective**

by Frank W. Putnam, M.D. New York, N.Y., The Guilford Press, 1997, 423 pages, \$38.95.

This is a comprehensive textbook on the causation, psychopathology, diagnosis, and treatment of dissociative disorders in childhood and adolescence. The author brings to the task extensive clinical experience, outstanding scientific credentials, and a lucid literary style. The book is wide-ranging, detailed, thorough, and balanced, yet the author is clearly an advocate for the validity and importance of dissociative disorders in children and adolescents.

The book starts with a discussion of childhood trauma and maltreatment and then goes on to a description of normal and pathological dissociation and the relationship between dissociation and memory processes. At the heart of the book is a hypothetical description of pathological dissociation in accordance with a "discrete behavioral states" model. Next, clinical vignettes are presented. The book finishes with a detailed discussion of the clinical phenomenology and the diagnosis of dissociative disorders, followed by a discussion of treatment philosophy, individual and family psychotherapy, out-of-home placement, and psychopharmacology. Appendices present 3 useful scales for the assessment of dissociative symptoms.

Putnam considers that pathological dissociation is qualitatively and categorically distinct from normal dissociation. His "discrete behavioral states" model is derived from Pechtl and Wolff, who first described infant behavioral states. Trauma is thought to create pathological behavioral states very different from the norm in terms of arousal, affect, and physiology. Thus, dissociative dysidentity is related to the fragmentation of autobiographical memory as a result of traumatic behavioral states.

Dissociation is a controversial field. Putnam's balanced advocacy for the validity of dissociative psychopathology is a powerful counter to the message of those who dismiss this group of disorders as iatrogenic. It will be very interesting to revisit the debate in 10 years' time. By then, this book may be regarded as a classic.

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### **Handbook of Essential Psychopharmacology**

by Ronald W. Pies, M.D. Washington, D.C., American Psychiatric Press, 1998, 416 pages, \$39.95 (paper).

"My goal is to provide the busy, practicing psychiatrist with a readily accessible and interactive source of up-to-date knowledge"—so states Ronald Pies in the introduction to his *Handbook of Essential Psychopharmacology*. This easy-to-read, 416-page paperback admirably achieves this goal. The author conveys current, important, and practical information in chapters covering 4 pharmacologic classes: antidepressants, antipsychotics, anxiolytics and sedative hypnotics, and mood stabilizers. Each chapter is organized into 4 sections: a succinct overview (5–8 pages), a block of useful, easy-to-read tables (about 30 pages), clinically relevant questions with informative answers (about 30 pages), and several pages of interesting "Vignettes and Puzzlers."

This organizational approach provides a varied and lively method of presenting information. Several topics are covered in each chapter, including mechanisms of action, pharmacokinetics, side effects, interactions, potentiating maneuvers, and use in special populations. Because of this format, a busy psychiatrist can easily read a section in a few minutes. The organization also facilitates looking up an answer to a targeted inquiry. Pies emphasizes the increasingly important area of practical pharmacokinetics throughout the book by means of case discussions demonstrating clinical consequences of pharmacokinetic drug interactions.

This book would not serve as the best introductory text for psychopharmacology, nor is it a comprehensive review of principles underlying basic psychopharmacologic mechanisms. It was not designed for either of these purposes. It is a terrific book for practicing psychiatrists who would like to update and review their psychopharmacology. The approaches used to convey information are creative and effective. I believe that this work fills an important niche, and I highly recommend it to its target audience.

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