

New Personality Self-Portrait: Why You Think, Work, Love, and Act the Way You Do

by John M. Oldham, M.D., and Lois B. Morris. New York, N.Y., Bantam Books, 1995, 450 pages, \$12.95.

This 450-page, paperbound book is coauthored by John Oldham, a distinguished psychoanalyst and veteran psychiatric researcher who was deeply involved in the evolution of the DSM-IV personality disorder criteria, and Lois Morris, an eminent writer on psychological topics for lay people. The two authors have blended their respective talents of scientific rigor and seamless writing in the revision of their 1990 book *The Personality Self-Portrait*. Like its predecessor, the current version is based upon the conviction that diagnosable disorders of personality are merely extremes along a continuum of individual personality differences. The new version has been updated to accommodate changes in personality disorder criteria from DSM-III-R to DSM-IV. It also contains additional data collected by the authors since 1990 and their response to the feedback on their earlier work from fellow researchers.

The book is built around a self-rating questionnaire that consists of 107 items representing six categories: interpersonal relationships and love life; work-related attitudes; self-image; emotional life; self-control, impulses, and appetites; and the sense of reality and spirituality. On the basis of responses to these 107 items, Oldham and Morris delineate 14 normal personality style categories. In keeping with the normative bent of their thinking, the authors assign colloquial rather than technical labels (e.g., "conscientious style," "devoted style," "dramatic style," "leisurely style," etc.) to these categories. A separate chapter is devoted to each of these 14 categories, describing the essential features of the particular "style," highlighting its manifestations in the six psychosocial areas mentioned above, and demonstrating the relationship between that particular personality style and the corresponding personality disorder that is its dysfunctional extreme. Each chapter also contains "tips for dealing with 'x' sort of person in your life" and a section on "making the most of your 'x' style" (e.g., "conscientious," "dramatic," etc.)

To illustrate, let us pick the "dramatic style" chapter, although, as already stated, the same essential outline applies to all other chapters. The "dramatic style" is portrayed as having seven characteristics: emotional demonstrativeness, living expansively, attention-seeking attitude, preoccupation with physical appearance, seductiveness, suggestibility, and rapid development of intimacy. This personality type is then described in terms of its emotions, relationships, self-image, self-control, sense of reality, and work-related attitudes. Following this, "tips on dealing with the dramatic person in your life" are offered. These include (1) "Don't clip this bird's wings," (2) "Appreciate, praise, flatter, and give feedback," (3) "Be romantic. Bring flowers, candy, gifts, and send valentines and mushy cards for every occasion," (4) "Be realistic about this person's relative inability or reluctance to handle certain responsibilities, including money," (5) "Don't hold grudges," and (6) "Avoid jealousy. . . . Try feeling flattered and turned on by the warm attention of others to your mate and have a good time at the party" (pp. 145–146). This is followed by six "exercises" for "making the most of your dramatic style" including "Every time you find yourself needing somebody's reaction, reassure yourself" and "To balance your natural spontaneity, work on restraint and planning" (pp. 146–147). Next, there is a description of histrionic person-

ality disorder and illustrations of it through some clinical vignettes.

Following 14 such chapters, the authors discuss the interplay of "temperament" (the genetically determined affectomotor and cognitive propensities) with environmental input and the impact of such interplay on the ultimate nature of an individual's personality. Basing their ideas upon the contributions of Sibylle Escalona, Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess, Daniel Stern, and Jerome Kagan, the authors emphasize that while genes present a range of possibilities, it is life experience that determines what will become of these inherent givens. The authors conclude with a chapter entitled "Strategies for Change" in which they highlight the signs when a personality style is tending to become dysfunctional and therefore is in need of professional intervention. In their characteristically eclectic, though psychodynamically sophisticated, manner, the authors then briefly describe what a lay person might expect from psychodynamic psychotherapies; supportive psychotherapy; behavior therapy; cognitive therapy; family, marital, and group therapy; experiential therapies; and pharmacotherapy.

Oldham and Morris have largely succeeded in accomplishing the Herculean task undertaken by them. Their language is simple and elegant. Their writing style and the organization of the book are well suited for the lay audience they have in mind. The ample provision of vignettes from both clinical and day-to-day life brings their propositions to life. The only potential weakness is the authors' occasional failure to avoid the tempting but futile endeavor of advice-giving (see especially the sections labeled "Tips for dealing with . . ." and "Making the most of your . . ."), an inherent pitfall in this sort of writing. To their credit, however, the foundations of their ideas always remain on solid theoretical and empirical grounds. Indeed, in deftly combining the categorical and dimensional systems of personality disorder classifications and extending this combination to personality types within the normal range, the authors have made a unique, useful, and thought-provoking contribution.

Salman Akhtar, M.D.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Structured Exercises for Promoting Family and Group Strengths

edited by Ron McManus, Ph.D., and Glen Jennings, Ed.D.
New York, N.Y., The Haworth Press, 1996, 301 pages, \$39.95.

The importance of cohesion, adaptability, and communication as dimensions of group behavior has emerged after years of experience and investigation in family and marital therapy, leading to the introduction of several techniques of clinical application of social skills in training and education of group psychotherapists. The essence of these therapies is the active participation in the group activities that provides the participants the opportunity to explore different patterns of behavior, examine their own feelings, learn how to alter the communication with others, and become aware of the aspects of their dysfunctional social relations. Most of the literature available on the topic covers theoretical framework combined with clinical case examples. It is usually easy to demonstrate the therapeutic technique, but the most difficult task is to write a handbook that can be easily understood by various more or less competent users.

This book seems to be an exception, since the authors, experienced group therapists, presented an extraordinary collection of group exercises designed to facilitate the work of different profiles of professionals who deal with any kind of group counseling or therapy.

My first impression was that this handbook is well organized and extremely easy to read and use. Each of the six sections is followed by a short description of the chapters, presenting the aim of the selected exercise and the type of group for which it is designed. The exercises are precisely defined, providing the reader with the basic information of objectives, materials needed, time required, and very specific instructions for implementing each exercise, which gives a quick orientation of the exercise one needs, without having to read the whole chapter.

The first section, "Icebreakers," is designed to help individuals become better acquainted with each other through a series of short exercises designed to promote verbal and nonverbal expression in a new environment and overcome their feelings of discomfort. The authors have chosen simple and understandable methods to encourage the participants to reveal more about each other through the use of common symbols and identification of the values they share in a group. In the second section named "Assessors," the authors deal with pathologic patterns of behavior in a dyadic relationship. Through a series of exercises, they identify the group and family values and areas that need improvement in a relationship (sexual satisfaction, fighting patterns, etc.) and encourage the clarification of individual feelings and intentions in order to improve the communication with others. The third section is devoted to the introduction of different modalities of dyad/couple discussions. Many carefully selected exercises are derived from well-known techniques like paradoxical intention, elements of psychodrama, etc. The authors astutely observe and emphasize the importance of intimacy in a couple's relationship and insist on all the modalities (touching, listening to music, eye-contact, imagination) that draw the partners closer together and enrich their dialogue skills.

In the fourth section, the previous topic is extended to families or larger groups. It is amply elaborated through 17 chapters so that the main idea of the section is somewhat diluted with

imaginative but not always necessary exercises. Some of them relate to the very important issues in family life like conflict situations, family rules, sexual education, and families in transition, while others reconsider the problem of mutual understanding and communication, adding new exercises to the list. One has to notice the original approach with creative card illustrations, which provide excellent discussion starters.

"The Enhancers," the fifth section of this handbook, is a mixture of different exercises that allow the participants to enrich their lives with relaxation, imagination, leisure activities, and fun. Although it is written in the same manner as the other chapters, covering an important area of everyday life, one has the impression that this book would have been as good without this section, because the families/groups that have accomplished an excellent communication further continue to enrich their lives with their own rituals and games without guidelines.

The last section, "Energizers," consists of diverse chapters dedicated to the development of individual skills and the increasing awareness of personal feelings and values. The authors point out the importance of tolerance and constructive approach in coping with emotionally difficult situations. Illustrations that accompany these exercises are very effective and represent an original, understandable approach to the problem. One may conclude that the authors combined excellently the elements of their own experience with familiar techniques of group therapy and elements of social games and created a handbook that covers all the aspects of partners' and group relations. Although some of these exercises could have been easily skipped, this variety offers users the possibility to apply different techniques in their therapeutic work. At the same time, the authors deserve admiration for the simplicity of language and original style used in this handbook, along with very precise guidelines that conform their rich experience and knowledge in this field. This book will therefore be very appealing to professionals at various skill levels who will find these exercises appropriate for individuals of different age groups or sophistication levels, and I strongly recommend it to others.

Dragana Bugarski Kirola, M.D.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin