From Surviving to Thriving
Promoting Mental Health in Young People

Andrew Fuller   ACER Press, 1998

This book provides a very readable and accessible Australian text which assembles many of the theories and empirical research conducted in relation to the developmental phase of adolescence, with a particular focus upon promoting mental well being in young people. There is a very appropriate distinction made between the sub-developmental stages of early adolescence, middle adolescence, and late adolescence. These distinctions have become more important as the entry into adolescence appears to commence sooner, while the attainment of full independence through employment and independent living occurs later, thus extending this phase for a period of time longer than ever before in history.

One of the strengths of the book is the placement of troubled adolescents within their normal developmental context. All too often young people with problematic behaviour are assessed without recognition of the developmental challenges that young people in the age group universally face, regardless of adversity and inter-familial dynamics and stressors. This perspective acts to normalise rather than pathologise troubled young people. There is an emphasis on the work of Catalano and others in relation to the notions of risk and resilience, concepts which have been embraced by the Department of Human Services in Victoria in its work with high risk adolescents. There is also the provision of useful approaches to communicating and engaging with young people, as well as strategies for working with families and parents. There is an appropriate emphasis adopted in relation to high risk behaviours that professionals need to be alerted to, as part of their duty of care responsibilities, such as suicidal ideation and intent; anger, bullying and violence; self harm and school refusal; and problematic use of substances. These high risk behaviours are all linked to the underlying issues of mental well being and mental health, the predominant theme adopted for the text.

The book provides a range of materials to augment the text in order to engage the reader, spanning profiles, surveys and charts; guided questions and tips; research data presented graphically; and summaries of key considerations. This presentation format enhances the readability of the book, and provides a variety of learning materials to suit a potentially wide audience. The book is thus highly 'user friendly' and

should be attractive to the diversity of the reading audience. The title is also very appealing, capturing the fundamental challenge facing those who work with troubled young people, in moving them from sub-optimal functioning to productive and fulfilling lives.

The Introduction to this book indicates that it is written for professionals working with young people from middle primary years to early adulthood. The range of professionals suggested as an audience include school support workers, social workers, child protection workers, psychologists, therapists, teachers, and year level co-ordinators. Despite the view adopted by the reviewer that the material included is all relevant, well assembled, thorough and accurate, there is concern that for some of the professional groups mentioned above it may be targeted at an elementary or entry level. Given the breadth and complexity of the issues covered in the text, and the plethora and depth of theories developed in the arena, it is inevitable that for many professionals the book will not introduce new content, or extend existing knowledge considerably. Yet for professionals studying or newly graduated in fields concerned with troubled young people, the book should provide an invaluable basis for undertaking more complex and advanced reading. It is also positive to find the text located in the Australian context, which again should provide a foundation for more advanced reading which mainly emanates from the United States and the United Kingdom.

This book thus provides a valuable addition to the Australian material on working with young people who may develop problematic behaviour, and is timely in its release in relation to the development of new Government initiatives at both the preventative end within schools, and at the tertiary end with high risk adolescent initiatives.

Reviewed by:

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The Australian Baby and Child Care Handbook

Carol Fallows   Penguin Books, 1998, 394 pp.

This book has been written by the editor of an Australian magazine, *Australia's Parents*, who has had extensive experience writing on child care issues. Her material and ideas have been collected from years of reading, writing and editing child care and development literature as well as her

own experience as a parent.

The content and style of this book reflects this journalistic approach to the subject. It is well structured, easy to read with text, pictures, detailed charts and diagrams displayed in a