

BOOK REVIEWS

Preventing Violence in Australia: Policy, Practice and Solutions

Day A. and Fernandez E. (2015). NSW: The Federation Press. ISBN 978 1 86287 994 2, 254 pages.

Reviewed by Dr Kathy Mendis, Risk Assessment and Management Panel Coordinator, Gippsland Lakes Community Health, Bairnsdale, Victoria 3875.

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Preventing violence in Australia: Policy, practice and solutions, edited by Andrew Day, Professor of Psychology at Deakin University and Ephrem Fernandez, Professor of Psychology at University of Texas, is a book filled with contributions from experts from a wide range of fields including psychology, sociology, social work, public policy, law and education in violence prevention. The editors, who have expertise in both clinical practice and scholarship, have skilfully amalgamated the various disciplinary and professional perspectives that exist on how to best prevent several different types of violence that pose huge challenges to Australian society. They represent violent crime, homicide, domestic violence, family violence in Indigenous communities, youth violence, alcohol-fuelled violence, mental health-related violence, racially-motivated violence, workplace violence and bullying in schools. The chapters are clearly written commencing with an overview of the prevalence of the issue, and make effective use of tables, charts and case studies to further articulate the points being made. Theoretical underpinnings driving practice are properly highlighted. The book is one of a rare kind because it presents prevention and intervention strategies that are known to be effective, including some internationally trialled methods, as possible solutions in addition to the usual aetiology and social and cultural impacts of violence that prevail in the literature.

There are a number of successful international and Australian programs and tools associated with preventing violence presented throughout the book and the issues discussed are timely. For example, there are three chapters considering youth violence. The rate of violence in Australian youths is relatively high and has been increasing over recent decades. The discussions outline international early intervention programs that have been effective in countering the four risk factors of: (1) relative disadvantage; (2) family violence and child maltreatment; (3) school failure and; (4) early age alcohol use. As these pro-

grams have been critiqued and evaluated carefully, the authors suggest that implementation with appropriate tailoring to an Australian context is sensible. This information will be particularly helpful to program designers and administrators.

Some chapters offer culturally sensitive perspectives. Australian case studies highlighting the strength of incorporating customary kinship practice among Indigenous communities into mainstream approaches will be a breath of fresh air to many practitioners who work with Indigenous communities on the mainland. Another example is the discussion of “High-risk special treatment” units in New Zealand. This is a prison-based intensive program for high-risk violent offenders of Maori or Pacific Islander descent. The program highlights the success of integrating mainstream treatment approaches with distinct cultural practices. Such approaches can be adapted to working with Indigenous and migrant communities in Australia. Bringing proven good practices such as these to attention, the editors provide “food for thought” to those who work at the front-line who do not necessarily have the time to conduct their own research.

The chapters contain plenty of practical insights as each topic is written by authors who have specific expertise in the area discussed. The discussions provide useful and, more often than not, novel or less-recognised information. As an example, Chapter 2 draws attention to certain aspects of the impact of violence on victims which are not yet broadly recognised, such as the impact of treatment by the police on a victim’s psychological state, and how having a voice during the judicial process may assist the victim’s recovery. These are important points but are generally absent from public discussions.

Overall, the book provides an at-a-glance information source for most of the common types of violence that occur in society. It is a valuable read for people interested in understanding violence in Australia generally, but also

accommodates those seeking to become informed about state-of-the-art prevention, risk assessment and intervention strategies.

In concluding, *Preventing Violence in Australia* is a reminder of the wide array of violence that affects present-day

society. At a time when domestic/family violence is finally attracting the political and social attention that it deserves, the release of this book will act as a warning that there are multiple other types of violence that also require a lot more attention.

Healing for Adults who Grew up in Adoption or Foster Care Positive Strategies for Overcoming Emotional Challenges

Renee Wolfs, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015, pp. 160, ISBN 978 1 84905 555 0, eISBN 978 0 85700 988 3

Reviewed by Di O'Neil, OAM, Di O'Neil Coaching

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This, in essence, is a self-help book for adults who grew up in adoption or foster care. It is easy to read, respectful and hopeful while dealing with the complicated mourning processes many adoptees and foster children go through. But it is also a book full of insights for professionals and caregivers. It could be read in privacy by a person seeking more understanding into the grief they are carrying from childhood. It could be shared between a worker and their client. It could be used in group work. It could be used in training foster carers and adoptive parents. Throughout the book there are many comments from adult adoptees and foster children. I believe these will both help the reader to connect with the points the author is making and validate many of their own experiences.

After a foreword, acknowledgements and introduction there are four chapters in the book.

Chapter 1, *Coping with Loss*, explains loss and grieving as a normal process. It sets the basis for discussion in the chapters that follow about the nature of loss for adoptees and foster children. The chapter starts with the process of change, talks about what loss is and what the mourning process is, what the themes in the mourning process are, addresses postponed, accumulated and complicated grief and introduces the impact of traumatic loss. The author introduces a clear and very helpful distinction between loss-oriented and constructive-oriented responses and the role of each. It ends with two sets of questions. The first, are knowledge questions that consolidate the ideas presented. The second, encourages personal reflection.

In Chapter 2, *Mourning the Core Loss*, the author moves into the world of those who have been adopted or placed in long term foster care. She introduces a useful distinction between 'what you have lost' and 'what you have lost contact with'. In the author's words, 'If you lose someone or something, you can create an opportunity to say farewell, which gives you a chance to re-establish a new and different

connection with what you have lost. Foster and adoption children don't usually lose their parents, but they lose contact with them' p.39.

She looks firstly at how children experience core loss, then adolescents, then adults. She looks at the accumulative effect of grief on dealing with life losses and the factors that hinder the mourning process. The need for professional help with postponed, accumulated and complicated grief is explained and supported. Again the chapter ends with a set of knowledge and personal questions.

Chapter 3, *The Circle of Connecting*, moves the readers forward into thinking about accommodating their grief while moving on: a balancing of the loss-oriented and constructive-oriented moments. The Circle of Connecting, is a process developed by the author. It is informed by Mindfulness and Acceptance and Commitment Theory and her professional experience. The chapter explores the seven fundamental elements of the Circle; body, past, present, future, mind, heart and surroundings. She explains that there are many different ways of mourning and as it has no beginning and no ending you can begin with any theme as each and every one of them can be an important source of healing. The text is well supported by questions to the reader and comments from adults as they reflect on the impact of loss and what has helped them cope with it. It finishes with ideas about saying farewell, giving meaning and connecting with your own life once more. Again the chapter ends with a set of knowledge and personal questions.

Chapter 4, *Contact with Your Birth Family*, addresses many of the joys and complications that professionals in the field already know about. However, for each individual who remains connected to or initiates a connection with the family they may have lost contact with, or just wonders who their birth family is, this chapter provides useful ideas. Contact during childhood and contact as an adult is seldom straight forward. Unpredictable things happen.