



**Book Reviewed:** Tesse and Moshe Lang, *Corrupting The Young and Other Stories of a Family Therapist*

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To write this review, I read Tesse & Moshe Lang's book "Corrupting the Young and Other Stories of a Family Therapist" for the second time. I enjoyed it as much as the first time I read it and more!! The book is a collection of anecdotes about therapeutic and training situations, which while brief, provide the reader with valuable insights and information about the highs and lows of therapy. It is divided into 4 sections titled:

- (a) The problem is not dancers but with the dance.
- (b) He did not tell us anything we did not already know.
- (c) Seeing is not believing.
- (d) But what will we talk about next time?

These titles made my mind tick over as I began thinking of different themes and clinical experiences which fit these general issues.

Each story gives a different message, a different perspective on life and therapy. At the end of each one, I wrote down the first thing that came into my head, the message I had learnt from the story. So much was about the strength of families (even those in crisis) and about their abilities to find their own solutions, and that often the simplest solution is the best. I recognized myself, my struggles as a therapist and mistakes in different stories, particularly when Moshe talks about his experiences as a trainee and

"new" therapist. In later stories, it was beneficial and rewarding to be able to peep into the therapy room of a more experienced and wiser therapist, who knew when to speak and intervene with therapeutic techniques and when "perhaps one of the most important and least appreciated forms of therapy is that of doing nothing or 'masterly inactivity'" (p.48).

The stories themselves are a mixed bag. Some are humorous, others very sad and moving, some made me angry and others left me confused and puzzled about family dynamics and how one might intervene to produce change. They really provide a smorgasbord of insights and ideas about therapy and the reader is left to take what she/he values and finds helpful, based on experience, the time and context of reading the book. These "lessons" or insights could have been presented in a different way; for example: a textbook, but then the magic of this book would have been lost. Stories, metaphors and analogies used in therapy are successful because of what they say without the use of explanations or rationales. The same applies for this book.

I would recommend "Corrupting the Young..." to beginning therapists, trainees and experienced therapists who practice from different frameworks. People who are not therapists will also enjoy it.

It is a delight to read and does not take too much time. Tesse and Moshe Langs' humour, compassion, strength and expertise shine through. They are great story tellers. The book is about therapeutic successes and some failures and the therapist is seen to be humane and fallible and not just "all knowing, all seeing and all intervening". This helps the reader feel more connected with the book and material and perhaps increases the benefits.

As therapists we hear a lot about different aspects of people's private lives and often the lessons we learn from them are invaluable. This quote from the foreword of the book helps me to remember this:

"Sometimes our work as therapists takes us to unusual places. Generally, however, we do not have to travel far. We merely sit in a chair and listen; the conversation does the rest. It may be an unusual life history, an unusual problem, an unusual solution or way of perceiving, that leads us into unknown and interesting territory. And we become aware that the unusual helps us to see again more clearly what we take for granted.

Moshe & Tesse Lang's book provides a rare opportunity for therapists to learn from other people's stories, in such an immediate and intimate way.

