



Book Reviews

Challenge, Choice and Change

A Guide to Developing Skills in Parenting, Communication and Living

by Philippa Chapman, Deborah Brewer-Eiszele & Liza Stevenson.

Centacare Family Services, New Town, Tas, 1994. 206pp. \$85 (plus \$10 postage)

In the midst of the gloom and doom which so often pervades the child and family welfare field, appears the Endeavour Program, an exciting innovation based on a model of residential group work developed by Centacare Family Services in Tasmania, a generic non-government family agency which strives to deliver a holistic family centred service. The Endeavour Program is one of a broad range of family centred services offered by the agency and is the culmination of many years of innovative and creative practice. It has depth and is grounded in an integrated set of practice theories.

This beautifully designed and produced set of five A4 spiral bound books provides a comprehensive guide to the Endeavour model of group work, developed in this agency under the leadership of social worker Sr Philippa Chapman. The program has evolved from the agency's work with low income, socially isolated 'at risk' families who have participated in a series of five day residential programs. Set in a beautiful coastal bush environment, with individual family cabins and recreational facilities for approximately 12 to 15 families at a time, the Endeavour program is a very 'naturalistic' group work model of intensive family centred practice.

The five books have an attractive layout aimed at facilitating easy absorption of the material, and are held together in a strong foldout cover. When the cover is opened out it reveals all five books, which together comprise a colourful child's body. The 'head' of the body is the Overview which sets out the theoretical concepts and the stages of the group process. The 'arms' consist of 'Energisers and Terminators', with lots of 'hands on' action-oriented ways to facilitate the group process, and handouts full of worksheets complete with short questionnaires and funny cartoons on topics such

as assertiveness, anger management, effective listening, lifeplans, building self-esteem etc. These are given to participants during the program. The 'heart' of the body consists of 'Workshops' and gives group facilitators detailed guidelines. The 'feet' are the 'Organiser' which is a very practical manual to 'kick' the program along, and includes detailed checklists for planning and evaluation. It even covers meals, medical emergencies, and organising the camp cleaning and garbage disposal. Reading these lists makes you realise just how much this manual is grounded in the detailed reality of practice experience.

The goal of the program is to intercept the cycle of social and emotional deprivation experienced by many lone parent and disadvantaged families who are struggling with the tasks of parenting. Families are invited to participate in a non-stigmatising way and, where possible, attend a pre-group interview to clarify expectations. The program is based on respect for the individual's capacity to make choices, and to develop specific goals which are related to their particular needs. Formal sessions for the adults include such topics as parenting models, health management, stress reduction, assertiveness, communication, and dealing with difficult child behaviours. These sessions are conducted in a very supportive and experiential manner, using art and 'adult learning' methods which do not rely heavily on literacy skills.

While the parents are involved in a set of sequentially arranged sessions, the children, who have often had abusive experiences, are involved in activities tailored to their particular needs, and receive close individualised attention. There are also lot of opportunities for informal interaction between participants. Recreational activities which facilitate positive interaction between adults and children are also used as naturalistic ways of intervening, and

sharing in good food and fun help in building a positive group climate.

Unlike some intensive programs, the Endeavour Program pays attention to follow-up services, linking participants into a range of services such as counselling, social support networks and material services to meet needs which have been identified, and to consolidate the gains made throughout the Endeavour Program. Ideally families attend the three residential programs that are available, each building on what has already been achieved. But this is not a prerequisite, and many families have gained a great deal from attending only one program.

The Endeavour Program is not promoted as a quick fix panacea but as a catalyst for change in troubled families, which, with assistance to consolidate the gains made, can act as a powerful turning point in their lives. Those who have developed the Endeavour Program have learned (perhaps the hard way) that to be most effective, the composition of the group requires a balance so that, for example, only a few families with intellectual disability or a background of gross deprivation or abuse, can be incorporated at one time. These and the other participants will gain more from the program when staff are not overwhelmed with the demands of too many families with massive and deep unmet needs.

One of the most refreshing aspects of this publication is the way the authors have been able to allow the parents' voice to come through. Participants' comments on their lives and on the Endeavour Program add a richness and the inclusion of the participants' experiences in their own words powerfully reflects the values and methods upon which the program is founded. The participants' responses to the program are routinely collected as part of the program and it is obvious that this feedback loop has been important in the refinement of the program.

This publication will be of great interest to a broad range of practitioners and managers in services for individuals and families. Its values, principles and conceptual framework have universal application and staff of varying backgrounds will find the publication a very valuable and easy to use tool in designing programs to fit the needs of different client populations. It will be of particular assistance to those trying to develop more effective programs for clients for whom traditional one to one 'therapy' with its heavy dependence on verbal skills has proved less than effective.

The Endeavour Program is an excellent example of the flowering of practice innovations which is happening in the field of child and family welfare in this country. It has many of the 'therapeutic ingredients' common to other recent innovations such as intensive family preservation programs and family group conferences. These innovations all share

values which are based on respecting and empowering families. They focus on strengths rather than deficits. They are truly 'family centred' and are typically delivered in a naturalistic setting and manner with everyday here and now experiences providing the 'teachable moments'. They value the feedback from families who are seen as partners in the process of building practice knowledge.

Practice innovations also have common organisational characteristics. They are pioneered by 'healthy' organisations, usually in the non-government sector, with leaders who have a strong direct practice background, the capacity to create a collectively shared vision and a positive agency culture, and a commitment to high standards of professional practice. In every state there are a couple of child and family welfare agencies of this calibre and they are at the forefront of 'world's best practice' in child and family wel-

fare, often well ahead of overseas innovations which we are sometimes more ready to recognise. Fortunately these agencies are disseminating their practice innovations - through conferences and publications. Centacare Family Services in Tasmania is clearly one of these agencies.

Challenge Choice and Change, The Endeavour Program can be obtained directly from Centacare Family Services, PO Box 369, Moonah, Tasmania 7009 (Telephone 002 78 1660). The Endeavour Program is already being positively received across state and national boundaries by other agencies. It symbolises an horizon of hope which is dawning for a new generation of families and a new generation of practitioners and reformers.

Reviewer: **Dorothy Scott**
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Moonglue by Daisy Utemorrhah, illustrated by Susan Wyatt

Broome, WA: Mamabala Books Aboriginal Corporation: 1993, 30pp, RRP \$14.95.

A boriginal collective experience and cultural dynamics have been made accessible to a wide audience through the tradition of storytelling, both orally, and more recently, through the written word. Although we are all able to learn of the wandering spirits of the Dreamtime, children, for whom the mysterious nature of living is expected and exciting, are an attractive audience choice. *Moonglue*, a children's book written by Daisy Utemorrhah, with illustrations by Susan Wyatt, is one example of a tale shared with the author during her own childhood, now adapted into a short book for enjoyment by another generation.

Although the plot gives expression to a universal adage that 'pride always comes before a fall', Utemorrhah's treatment of it is refreshing and colourful. We read of two young Aboriginal brothers who do not heed their mother's numerous warnings not to look at the moon, and who are consequently punished by being stuck together by a substance known as moon glue, depos-

ited on them by the moon itself. Not only are they uncomfortable, but they have also caused their mother much despair. She tries to separate her sons to no avail, and decides to take them to the Mapan man (a traditional doctor, as is explained later in the book) who also cannot help. This incident suggests a sense of powerlessness of people against the mysterious ways of Nature. The brothers are now truly sorry they disobeyed their mother.

On their journey home from the Mapan man's camp, the boys become hot and ask their mother if they may have a swim in a 'shady pool of water' which they have come across. She gives her permission and the boys jump into the water. 'Underneath the surface something happened', Utemorrhah writes, 'To their joy, they were separated'. The boys exit the water and join their mother, vowing to 'never do that (watch the moon) again'. All hug in celebration of the boys' freedom.

This is a story which illustrates the fate of those who do not listen to their parents. However, in challenging their mother's warning, these

brothers are, in a sense, also challenging the wisdom of ancestral experience and the spiritual law of the land.

Susan Wyatt's evocative, although untraditional, illustrations also add much to this story. As night is the time for much of the action, Wyatt has used dark blues with bold outlines to depict the characters and the land. This contrasts well with the bright oranges and yellows of the moon and the light it casts on the boys and their mother. The day time scenes and the underwater scene are filled with rich reds, oranges and browns typical of the region from whence the story came - the Kimberley, a fact which is drawn at the start of the book by way of a map section of the area. Native grasses and trees are also a feature of these illustrations.

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of the presentation of this story is that the last four pages contain a version of the tale in dramatic form for performance. There is even some extra action included for dramatic effect, and ideas for staging. This makes an