

Book Review of "Mental Health Promotion: A Lifespan Approach"

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Citation

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Abstract

The book titled, "Mental health promotion: A lifespan approach," (1) focuses on mental health promotion using a lifespan approach. This topic is important as mental health is increasingly recognized as an important factor affecting population health throughout the world. A health promotion approach can be an effective way to address on a population level the mental health of communities, something which may be very challenging to do on an individual basis.

One chapter (Chapter 2) has an extensive review of the differences between mental health, mental well-being, and mental illness and suggests that mental health is more than just an absence of mental illness. This chapter also reviews how cultural interpretations are related to mental health. Lastly, a number of theories relating to mental health promotion are reviewed including a comprehensive and apparently original table comparing and contrasting how each of these six different theories relate to a number of important topics of relevance to mental health promotion. Another chapter (Chapter 3) overviews many of the important consensus statements on mental health promotion and provides a very brief overview on the theories and models useful for mental health promotion.

The book then has separate chapters for specific age groups including infancy and childhood (Chapter 4), adolescence and emerging adulthood (Chapter 5), adulthood (Chapter 6), and older adults (Chapter 7). Each of these chapters generally contains an introduction on the topic, issues of relevance to this particular age group, special groups or topics of interest (e.g., gender, cultural groups), and reviews of relevant mental health promotion interventions.

Overall the book offers a sound basis for a comprehensive overview of the topic of mental health promotion. The breakdown by age group is especially useful. Numerous

times in the chapters there are summary boxes provided to help the reader digest the key points covered over a particular section of a chapter. Also, sometimes some interventions are highlighted in the summary boxes too.

There are some areas that the book could have included that would be useful too. In Chapter 2 the authors discuss ideas about mental health from the perspective of different religions and cultures. They include almost all of the major religions, including Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. However, they omit Judaism. The reader is left wondering why this major religion was excluded. Also, there is no mention at all about the numerous traditional religions or cultures in Africa. There are many Africans who would benefit from mental health promotion and an understanding of African culture and traditional religion would be very useful to include too.

Another area lacking is regarding the four chapters that reviews relevant mental health promotion interventions by age category (Chapters 4 through 7). The reader is not guided on how to implement the particular mental health promotion programs. Also, the interventions are reviewed very briefly and one is quite curious to understand what techniques made this intervention useful. Also, it would be useful to understand the criteria for why a particular intervention was chosen and reviewed and the evidence base for the intervention, as clearly there are many numerous interventions not included. Only in the adulthood chapter is a table included quoting from the Mental Health National Service Framework which reviews a number of health promotion topics and indicates the level of evidence for them. I believe that the authors have the expertise to help inform readers about the evidence levels for the reviewed health promotion interventions. On a similar note, in the chapter on older adults, the decision is made to provide

many examples of good practice that the authors write are not necessarily based upon theory or research evidence. This may not be a valid approach for a scholarly book.

In conclusion, readers will enjoy the many topics discussed in the book. This book is a useful overview for mental health

promotion and will stimulate practitioners and researchers to delve more into this important topic.

References

1. Cattam M, Tilford S. Mental health promotion: A lifespan approach. McGraw-Hill, England, 2006.

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