

**Counselling Young People:
Person-Centred Dialogues**
Richard Bryant-Jefferies
Radcliffe Medical Press
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In his introduction Richard Bryant-Jefferies says 'this book has been written with the aim of demonstrating the counsellors' application of the person-centred approach when working with young people' and in my opinion it goes a long way towards that. If I were to write a book with that aim, this would be it. It enthused me, informed me and challenged me in equal measure.

He has used an unusual format in that he has written in the style of a transcript of sessions but included its analysis within the text. I loved this. It gave me a real sense of being in the room in the sessions, an involvement with the process that is so important when working in a person-centred way.

The book is written in two sections in the form of two fictitious counselling relationships – one in a youth counselling setting, one in a school setting. The aim is to enable the reader to enter the worlds of the young person and the counsellor, while constantly underpinning the work with person-centred theory.

I read this book with several hats on. As a counsellor working with young people in a secondary school I was interested to see how he dealt with the challenges of working in a person-centred way within an institution. I found some of the analysis of the interactions in the sessions very thought-provoking when I applied them to my practice. Bryant-Jefferies does not assume that the reader has an in-depth knowledge of person-centred counselling and explains clearly what might have been going on in the counselling sessions. For example, he uses part of one session to demonstrate the actualising tendency. He explains what this means and its impact on the development of new configurations of self. Linking theory to practice makes it clearer to understand. Each chapter introduces a new theoretical point, clearly stated in a box, enabling the reader to take the theory and relate it to earlier exchanges.


The chapters on supervision were useful on several levels. They challenged me as a supervisor, making me consider how I might respond, in both personal and ethical terms as well as with regard to responsibility, to a supervisee bringing these issues. These chapters

may be useful for counsellors at the beginning of their person-centred training to give them a flavour of how supervision might be used.

At the end of each chapter are some points for discussion. I found these thought-provoking. Some gave me the opportunity to reinforce my own thoughts on theory and how I might apply it to gain an understanding of my work; some gave me a new perspective from which to examine my practice.

This is an exciting book. It clearly links theory and practice and gives a flavour of how the person-centred approach can be used in building relationships with young people.

Jill Cook
Person-centred counsellor and supervisor



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