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March 2, 2002

Book review: Janet Sasson Edgette. (2002). *Candor, connection and enterprise in adolescent therapy*. W. W. Norton & Company: New York (203 Pages).

Although my practice of psychology modified over years to focus largely on adults and forensic issues, it remains necessary to deal with adolescents and their issues in both practice and personal life. Having had the opportunity to interview and test over 1,500 adolescents while employed at a youth service organization and having examined depression and violence in adolescents (see Cooperstein, M. A. [1999, August]. *The Storms of Youth: Violence, Depression and the Need for Adolescent Research*, *Pennsylvania Psychologist Quarterly*), it became glaringly apparent how little we understood adolescents, their issues, and effective helping modalities. Accordingly, I hoped that Edgette's book would offer fresh insights into helping adolescents. I was not disappointed.

Almost conversational in character, Edgette's book is extremely readable. Her writing style is light, yet not without seriousness, and prominent aspects of her discussion are highlighted. In the book design, however, some extracted ideas/statements are emphasized by indenting paragraphs with inserted ovoid-shaped concepts or statements. While valuable and worthy of attention, I found this approach somewhat distracting from the flow of reading.

In her therapeutic approach, Edgette infuses the psychotherapeutic process with humanistic, yet reality-based and existential values, stressing freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's acts. This is reflective, perhaps, of the influence of Milton Erickson (she is the Co-director of the Milton Erickson Institute of Philadelphia) who described treatment as a means of helping individuals transcend their perceived limits.

Edgette's level of intimacy and personal involvement challenge traditional "objective" therapeutic orientations. Instead, the therapist is portrayed as more individualistic, feeling and humanized, reflecting back thoughts, feelings and reactions regarding the therapeutic process, sharing the teen's gestalt of the experiential moment.

Edgette demonstrates much awareness of and sensitivity to adolescents' oft-disguised boundaries and motives. Rather than hurriedly "push" towards problem resolution according to one's professional time frame, Edgette empathically shares the adolescents' phenomenal world, accepting the Client where they are (within the limits of safety), and creating a safe environment within which intimacy may evolve at a comfortable pace comfortable for the Client. Through transparency, forthrightness, intimacy, and non-threatening reflection, she moves into the Client's system of perception and beliefs, inviting the Client to partake in more functional interpersonal collaboration without obvious methodological techniques or gimmickry.

Edgette provides the adolescent psychotherapist with realistic scenarios and alternative means by which they may be handled, providing functional and non-functional approaches.

Parental or familial needs are not ignored, as Edgette empathically addresses aspects of the interactive impact upon one another in family and parental situations.

Realistically, Edgette indicates that treatment timing/pacing is a factor and that not all adolescents will respond as one would hope. She also recognizes that a given psychotherapist is not necessarily appropriate for all adolescents and that not all Clients will be helped.

This is one of those rare books in which advance approbation on the book jacket correlates well with the adequacy of the material. As Edgette says "moving teenagers from scorn, defeatism, hopelessness, belligerence, or self-destructive to curiosity, contemplation, engagement, and modulation is just plain magic" (page 193). This is reminiscent of the philosophical comment affirmed by Dustin Hoffman's adopted, Native American grandfather in "Little Big Man", an elderly chief, who climbs a hill and performs rituals preparing for his death. When death does not come, he shrugs, rises, and says to his adopted grandson, "Sometimes the magic works, sometimes it doesn't". In much the same way, Edgette provides some of the tools that are necessary in helping, but not guaranteeing, the magic will become more effective.

I enthusiastically recommend this book as a substantial contribution to adolescent psychotherapy and have recommended it to parents and adult therapists.