

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Child Survivor: Healing Developmental Trauma and Dissociation* by Joyanna L. Silberg. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013, 288 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-88995-7. \$39.95.

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*The Child Survivor: Healing Developmental Trauma and Dissociation*, by Joyanna Silberg, is an excellent resource for clinicians who work with children and teens who have been traumatized and exhibit dissociative symptoms. Silberg shares her years of clinical experience working with and treating youth with dissociative disorders at the Sheppard Pratt Health System. She has crafted a text that provides both essential foundational information about developmental trauma as well as a specific approach to treating children who suffer from dissociative disorders. Recognized as an international expert in the area of dissociation, she expands the work in this area to an often ignored population, the youngest clients. Although the book addresses a topic that is difficult for clinicians to handle therapeutically, the reader will find the text easy to comprehend. Silberg writes in a manner that takes complex topics and issues and makes them manageable for the reader. The terrifying traumatic experiences that many of Silberg's clients have experienced are shared, but the reader is provided with strategies for handling these multifaceted issues and the resultant feeling as one progresses through the book is hopefulness.

Silberg begins with an overview of the effects of trauma and introduces the reader to dissociative symptoms. However, the bulk of the book is devoted to Silberg's presentation of the EDUCATE model. This acronym provides an organizing framework for the interventions used in the treatment of dissociative children and teens. "Each letter in EDUCATE represents a class of interventions that are utilized sequentially and that help to address dissociative symptoms and reverse dissociation-based resistance" (p. 61). The interventions include educating the child about dissociation and trauma, analyzing the factors that keep the client utilizing dissociation, uncovering the hidden aspects of the client and then assisting the client in reclaiming these, arousal modulation and affect regulation, identifying triggers to traumatic responding, and finally, helping the client to approach new situations without trauma based responding. Silberg expertly weaves multiple case examples into each chapter including client drawings and other artistic renderings as well as transcripts of sessions. Specific, directive interventions will be most useful to the clinician who struggles with what to say and how to proceed in a session. Suggestions are offered to tackle the symptoms these traumatized

children display which are often resistant and difficult to treat including dissociation, rage, amnesia, somatic complaints, and emotional numbing. Silberg reconceptualizes these symptoms as the tools traumatized children have developed to navigate and survive an often unpredictable and abusive world. Thus, the children in the book move beyond victimization and become survivors, thus bearing witness to the book's title.

*The Child Survivor* is replete with citations to previous work by Silberg as well as other current literature in the field of dissociative disorders. There is expert use of metaphors with children throughout the book as the author shares examples of how to respond to client symptomatology. Incorporating aspects of affect regulation theory, affect avoidance theory, and behavioral theory, Silberg describes a multi-modal approach to the treatment of dissociative disorders. Integrating the family and caregiver into treatment is discussed in chapter 12 as the book begins to expand the focus beyond the individual client. The book also emphasizes the neurobiological changes that these clients experience, but address these biological issues in a fundamental fashion. The concluding chapters of the book examine the role of the clinician as advocate, termination, and issues of reimbursement for services. Focus is given to other treatment providers, the legal system, and educational systems, which impact the child's recovery allowing for a truly comprehensive treatment plan. In the end, Silberg shares the final stages of treatment and the outcome of several of the cases embedded in the book. The reader is left energized and hopeful but also realistic about working with such a troubled population.

The book contains several appendixes where Silberg provides guides to further illustrate the topics addressed in the book. These include an interview guide for dissociative symptoms in children, an imaginary friends questionnaire, and clinician checklists for the following concerns: autobiographical amnesia, managing urinary and bowel incontinence, managing aggressive children and teens, and family work. These checklists provide a single reference point for the clinician when focusing on such issues. In addition, there are several more comprehensive instruments available at the publisher Web site for download.

For any clinician who works with this population or suspects they may have children and teens who display dissociative symptoms, *The Child Survivor* is a reading list must. By using the EDUCATE model, the reader gains an understanding of a comprehensive and structured approach to working with these clients to reduce symptoms and allows them to function better. This book provides extensive coverage of the issue of dissociative symptoms in youth and how to address them. Rather than feeling despair, the clinician is motivated by the success of Silberg with her clients and better equipped to work with these youth.