

## **Book Review**

***Healing Eating Disorders with Psychodrama and Other Action Methods: Beyond the Silence and the Fury.* By Karen Carnabucci and Linda Ciotola. Jessica Kingsley Press, 2013.**

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“We are souls dressed up in sacred, biochemical garments, and our bodies are the instruments through which our souls play their music.” This is a segment of a quote from Albert Einstein, which serves as the warm-up to Chapter 2, “The New Neuroscience” in this beautifully crafted book. It is an apt reflection of the work presented by the authors. Eating disorders are not presented as merely a problem to be solved, but as a particular type of imbalance or disease within the totality of the individual: body, mind, and spirit. Carnabucci and Ciotola share with us their vast experience and insight for working in a manner that integrates these three aspects of a human being in treatment planning, in implementation, and in follow-up. By focusing on the totality of the individual and sharing both philosophies and techniques concerning the integration of body, mind, and spirit as a guiding principle for moving toward greater health, they remind us that true healing work with any disorder or collection of symptoms must be so inspired.

The authors offer clear and thoughtful techniques for integrating many therapeutic approaches (psychodrama, Family Constellation work, etc.) with body-based techniques (yoga and Reiki) and spiritual practice (meditation). They ground their practice in sound, evidence-based research and translate theory into practice with clarity and artfulness. Each set of techniques presented is accompanied by variations and suggestions for ways to alter the techniques to suit the specific needs of the client. Carnabucci and Ciotola are generous in crediting colleagues who are also working in the field and whose work has stimulated their own.

Whether you are an experienced psychodramatist interested in exploring how to utilize your known methodology in working with clients with eating disorders, a therapist experienced in working with clients with eating disorders who is interested in learning how to broaden and deepen your practice, or someone who falls somewhere between the two, you will find relevant, stimulating, and sound information in this book.

The scope and range of the information presented is impressive. The opening chapter, “The Body as a Battleground,” lays the foundation with an overview of the extent of eating disorders and their various behavioral manifestations, the seriousness of the threat they present to both physical and mental health, and the necessity for utilizing a holistic approach for successful treatment.

Subsequent chapters offer additional theory and methodology. Information on neurobiology provides scientific grounding relevant to the psychoeducational aspects of treatment as well as evidence of the effectiveness of action methods as a treatment modality.

An overview of the psychodramatic method offers background for those without deeper knowledge of action techniques in their work. A developmental perspective both grounds the work in sound theory and provides strategies for action interventions.

There are chapters that focus on men with eating disorders as well as children and older adults. Considerations specific to each population are thoughtfully and clearly presented, including how to work with the parents of children and youth who have eating disorders.

Other chapters provide an historical perspective on social norms about body size, diet, and resulting behaviors; an exploration of the link between eating disorders and trauma; and the connection of disordered eating to family history across generations. Each continues to build a sound theoretical understanding while offering action suggestions for treatment.

Especially valuable, I believe, are chapters that focus on body awareness and spiritual practice. They are testaments to the philosophical and theoretical foundations of psychodrama as originally articulated by J. L. Moreno.

Having known both of the authors for some time, and having had the opportunity to work with them, I expected that their collaborative work would be good. I was delightfully surprised at the way in which the excellence of this work, in terms of both its art and its craft, far exceeded my expectations.

The authors conclude their work with relevant appendices: expected changes in the *DSM-5* concerning diagnosis of eating disorders; signs, symptoms, and consequences of eating disorders; what’s in the psychodrama room; and more. A thorough glossary and bibliography round out the book.