

BOOK REVIEWS

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The human touch

HERE is a mixture of a personal journey through manic depression and a general guide to mental health. One of the authors has manic depression and the other is his friend and GP.

The book is in three sections. The first comprises dialogues between the authors about manic depression, which jumps around different subjects and stages of the one author's life and mental states. It discusses beliefs about manic depression, and gives useful factual information. But this section is very much about one person's experience. It does not have a coherent order, so for those with no knowledge of manic depression it might not give an overall picture of the condition.

The second section consists of nine individual dialogues by people who have experienced manic depression. These are

You Don't Have to be Famous to have Manic Depression: The Insiders Guide to Mental Health

JEREMY THOMAS & TONY HUGHES
LONDON: PENGUIN; 2006;
Pb £12.99 (ISBN 978 0 718 14968 0);

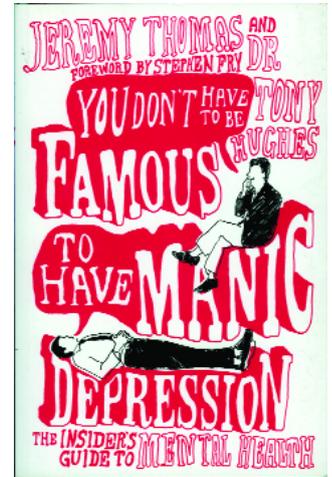
REVIEWED BY Vicki Heathcote

concisely written, fascinating insights into individual differences in the experience of manic depression. They add a human touch and balance out the dominance of only one person's experiences in the first section.

The third section is an A to Z of mental health related terms, conditions, services that might actually be available, treatments, and significant people. Drawing on a wide range of sources, it is written with humour and appears by and large to carry off the difficult task of giving a concise yet balanced view. The information about famous

personalities' mental health difficulties adds interest and aids the general destigmatising feel of the book.

There is a rather small entry for 'Psychologists' that does not adequately describe the range of the role; for example, there is no indication that psychologists and psychiatrists use different models to understand mental health. There is however more information about psychotherapy, with the qualification that many different professions including psychologists carry out psychotherapy. This section includes a good range of



information on websites, books and groups. There is a useful recommended reading list at the back of the book too.

Overall this book would be suitable for any level of reader, and is easily accessible to someone with no knowledge of mental health difficulties. As a reader with some previous knowledge of manic depression, I still found it added usefully to my knowledge. Despite an implicit acceptance that manic depression is an illness and that medication is the treatment, there are some concessions to psychological processes and systemic influences on mental health.

The book gives many examples of how individuals have learned to live with the condition, through early recognition of an episode occurring and management strategies. The guide section of the book could usefully be dipped into when needed for information and resources. Many people who could benefit from the more general mental health information – don't be put off by the title, which suggests that the book focuses purely on manic depression.

■ Vicki Heathcote is a clinical psychologist working in mental health in Chertsey, Surrey.

INSIPID OR INSPIRED?

AFTER the first few pages, I sat back and looked again at this book, much as I would a pizza topped with anchovy, papaya and pickled lemon – inspired fusion, or insipid effort to clear out the cupboard? I'm afraid to say, it's the latter.

This book brings together a clutch of loosely connected papers, mostly experimental in focus, under a rice-paper umbrella of 'self'. It all starts with a stodgy introduction by the editor that, incredibly, is no more than the chapter abstracts cobbled roughly together.

Then, it's the concept of 'self' – admittedly a tricky one at the best of times, its use throughout this book is quite haphazard and opportunistic. The diverse areas covered, from mathematical achievement in primary schoolchildren, through aerobic exercise in psychiatric inpatients, to another version of a social desirability scale, serve only to weaken any coherence.

The Concept of Self in Education, Family and Sports

ANNE P. PRESCOTT (ED.)
NEW YORK: NOVA SCIENCE; 2006; Hb £63.99
(ISBN 1 59454 988 5)

REVIEWED BY Alex King

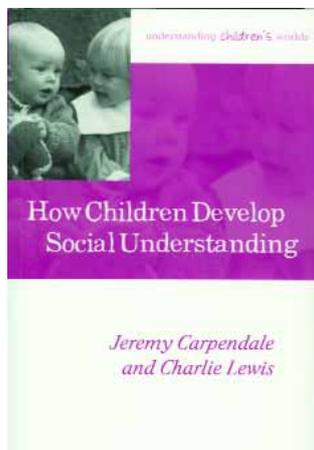
One highlight is a clear and specific review chapter on self-esteem in physically disabled athletes. Another impressive-looking chapter, replete with complex graphs and mathematical formulae, may be seminal, but I will never know because the English it's written in is unfathomable. Where was the editor, yet again?

■ Dr Alex King is with the Hillingdon Hospital, Middlesex.

Understanding understanding

THIS book is presented as part of a general series that focuses on how children understand their world. In this particular publication a theme emerges that Carpendale and Lewis suggest is under-recognised – that the minds of children develop through the social processes of interaction with other persons. The authors consider the obvious complexities that are involved with interaction in a social world and discuss some of the difficulties that can exist for children (and adults) who are not able to develop the skills necessary for social understanding.

By presenting comparisons between children who have relatively good functioning in the areas of social understanding and those who have pervasive conditions (e.g.



autistic spectrum disorder), an authoritative and convincing argument is put forward as to the necessity of social understanding skills in order to develop appropriately in an ever increasing social world. A central area of the argument is that of the child's strength in understanding false beliefs (e.g.

How Children Develop Social Understanding

JEREMY CARPENDALE & CHARLIE LEWIS
OXFORD: BLACKWELL; 2006;
Pb £17.99 (ISBN 978 1 4051055 0)

REVIEWED BY **Chris Boyle**

in the unexpected transfer test, when a bar of chocolate is moved from one location to another – which the viewer can see – when the subject is out of the room; the false belief is that on return the person expects the chocolate bar to be in the place that it was left. Throughout the book there are many examples used that help to illustrate important arguments and guide the reader through various stages of the development of social understanding in children.

The goal of this publication, in the words of the authors, is to 'evaluate critically the

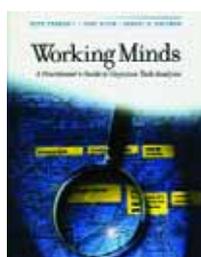
research and theory during the past 25 years on the topic of children's social cognitive development'. Carpendale and Lewis certainly meet their aims and provide a well-presented, interesting, and clearly well-researched book which goes into an appropriate area of detail in this extremely important area of child development.

■ *Chris Boyle is an Educational Psychologist with South Lanarkshire Psychological Service and is also a Teaching Fellow at the University of Dundee.*

Highly readable introduction

THIS is a book about understanding expertise – knowing what goes on in the heads of skilled decision makers so that we can identify training requirements, improve design, and generally help people 'get things done better'. Cognitive task analysis (CTA) offers the toolkit for accessing and analysing those decision processes, as well as applying the results in improving the work domain.

Given the myriad of CTA methods in the literature, the authors' intent is to provide a handbook of the 'why' and the 'how' of doing CTA in context. They structure the book in three sections: CTA tools, a background in cognition, and CTA applications. Numerous examples are provided throughout the book on the authors' experiences of analysing the expertise of military commanders, nurses, firefighters and weather forecasters. On the whole they do a good job of selling the benefits of CTA to the reader –



Working Minds: A Practitioner's Guide to Cognitive Task Analysis

BETH CRANDALL, GARY KLEIN & ROBERT HOFFMAN
CAMBRIDGE: MIT PRESS; 2006;
Pb £25.95 (ISBN 0 262 53281 6)

REVIEWED BY **Mark Young**

if you weren't a convert before,

you probably will be after.

There are some drawbacks – the 'handbook' element is only truly in evidence in Part I and the appendix, and within this there is an emphasis on knowledge elicitation at the expense of data analysis and representation (though the authors do acknowledge that this imbalance reflects the state of the literature at present). The section on cognition gives a good history and philosophical stance on the science but neglects a decent overview of skill acquisition for the reader unfamiliar

with this area.

Nevertheless, this is a highly readable introduction to CTA, and will be of value to psychologists and ergonomists who are working with experts in complex application domains. I did wonder whether the authors had considered using CTA on themselves to understand the nature of CTA expertise and from there write the training manual on CTA. But maybe that's pre-empting the second edition.

■ *Dr Young is a research lecturer in the School of Engineering and Design at Brunel University.*