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Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The Responsible Treatment Of Complex Post-Traumatic And Dissociative Disorders



Synopsis

Every therapist who has worked with adult survivors of severe child abuse is aware of the perils associated with helping to rebuild an adult psyche shattered in childhood. All too often, in their efforts to identify and go beyond the defenses and compensatory tactics of young victims who elect to numb themselves to the pain of abuse, many bright, well-meaning therapists find themselves hopelessly entangled in therapeutic and interpersonal traps. How, in today's increasingly litigious climate, can therapists be sure that they are pursuing the most rational and effective course of treatment while, at the same time, safeguarding themselves against common professional snares? This book may provide the answer. In *Rebuilding Shattered Lives*, James A. Chu, MD, describes a proven approach to the assessment and treatment of post-traumatic and dissociative disorders developed at the Dissociative Disorders and Trauma Program at McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Drawing on his extensive empirical research and more than a decade's clinical experience specializing in treating survivors of severe abuse, Dr. Chu also offers valuable insights into all the major areas of trauma-related symptomatology and provides the most detailed explanation of dissociative theory currently in print. And, with the help of numerous vignettes and case examples, he clearly illustrates common clinical dilemmas encountered when dealing with survivors of severe abuse as well as the most effective techniques for resolving them. The book opens with an integrated, up-to-date account of trauma theory and symptomatology. Chapters focus on complex dissociative and post-traumatic symptoms, difficulties in development and maturation, amnesia and other traumatic memory problems, and differential diagnosis. In the following section, Dr. Chu outlines his treatment strategies and offers valuable guidelines on managing self-destructive behavior, controlling dissociative and post-traumatic symptomatology, and navigating the maze of the therapeutic relationship. Concluding chapters are devoted to special topics and include a review of the latest treatment strategies for dissociative identity disorder, crisis intervention, and working with regressed and "impossible" patients. *Rebuilding Shattered Lives* is an important working resource for mental health workers of all levels of experience. Throughout, the writing style is clear, and complex theories are explained with an emphasis on how they provide the conceptual basis for a rational, responsible, and safe approach to treatment. "A major contribution to the clinical trauma literature by one of the field's most experienced clinicians." --Christine Courtois, PhD author of *Healing the Incest Wound* "Dr. Chu brings calm lucidity to controversies around trauma, integrates recent advances in the field with traditional therapy strengths and provides clinicians with a balanced and sensible phase-oriented treatment approach. Best of all, in this volume he has deepened his area of greatest strength, working with relational challenges faced

and posed in therapy by individuals with complex post-traumatic disorders." --Denise J. Gelinas, PhD Harvard Medical School. "Dr. James Chu charts a deliberate and thoughtful approach to the treatment of severely traumatized patients. Written in a straightforward style and richly illustrated with clinical vignettes, *Rebuilding Shattered Lives* is filled with practical advice on therapeutic technique and clinical management. This is a reassuring book that moves beyond the confusion and controversies to address the critical underlying issues and integrate traditional psychotherapy with more recent understanding of the effects of trauma and pathological dissociation." --Frank W. Putnam, MD.

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Customer Reviews

"...a very thoughtful and valuable addition to the literature and one that merits reading." (European Eating Disorders Review, Vol 8/4, 2000)

The most up-to-date, integrative, and empirically sound account of trauma theory and practice available. Based on more than a decade of clinical research and treatment experience at the Harvard Medical School, this comprehensive and non-technical text offers a stage-oriented approach to understanding and treating complex and difficult traumatized patients, integrating modern trauma theory with traditional therapeutic interventions.

After seeing Dr. James Chu on video, and being- for the most part- impressed with his sensitive and

astute nature, I decided to read his book. Any therapist or psychiatrist, especially those who are beginning to work with clients who have trauma histories, as well as any client who can meaningfully make use of insights (sometimes difficult ones) can find value in Dr. Chu's careful and detailed work. This is a rather simplistic summary: Dr. Chu covers the structure of treatment, boundaries, session frequency, managing the disempowered client, as well as the many presentations and complexities of dissociative disorders and post traumatic behaviors such as transference, self inflicted violence, regression, and intolerable internal conflict- among others. Bringing his work to full vividness are the relevant clinical case examples liberally included. With great skill, Dr. Chu adeptly discusses cases that may appear to be dissociative disorders but, in fact, are not. Dr. Chu's engaging and accessible writing style and attention to the many complexities and nuances of the dynamics of treatment are extremely helpful, especially in the context of current societal black and white thinking. A brilliant crystallization of the issues surrounding the validity of memory is included in the book. Dr. Chu covers recent neurological evidence as well as implicit and explicit memory. He advises caution, although certainly not abdication of the responsibility to be compassionate and supportive. In addition, there is extensive attention paid throughout the book to reenactment of trauma and the various ways reenactment presents itself. Ultimately, Dr. Chu's book contains a quality synthesis of the current understandings of dissociative disorders and indicated treatments- cutting edge. His perspective is resonant with the true meaning and experiences of dissociation.

I found Dr. Chu's book to be quite comprehensive and "real" in his approach to working with complex dissociative disorders. His approach to the writing on this topic is both personal and highly clinical in nature. I believe that all clinicians working with these complex clients should take the opportunity to read Dr. Chu's work as it allows one to actually think about her own treatment style and approach, and to evaluate mistakes as well as successes. I also see this as a valuable resource for clients dealing with these complex issues in a way that gives them a solid basis for their own treatment. My one concern was the short shrift given to the area of ritual abuse and its manifestations. I feel that Dr. Chu could have more thoroughly researched some of the current theories of mind control and presented a more comprehensive understanding of this very complex treatment. This does not, however, alter my overall opinion of the book.

Although I haven't read this book yet I want to add that I had a brief session with Dr. Chu this month and was impressed with his compassion and sensitivity. He was warm and friendly and very clearly did what he could to help me feel comfortable in such an uncomfortable situation. He serves as a

consultant to the program I was in and that's how I was able to meet with him. And I am very glad that he was able to give his input to my treatment team.

I purchased this because I keep using the information in various lit reviews, and other assignments. It is truly a great addition to my library

I thought the book was rather comprehensive, but I noticed about one page on ritual abuse including satanic ritual abuse. That, and the fact that his program only caters to females are my main objections. I also agree with one of the other reviewers about the author who has no compassion yet writes a book seemingly with compassion. I know this due to inquiring about his program twice. He is now an administrator who no longer does direct therapy and that is perhaps the main reason he wrote his book (for promotion and pay).

I was very interested to read this book, particularly anything new on the neurobiology, I was very disappointed. I decided to call the author since I suffer from DiD myself. He is in two words unempathic to the suffering and insufferable.

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