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“A guide to therapeutic child care: what you need to know to create a healing home” by Ruth Emond, Laura Steckley and Autumn Roesch-Marsh, 2016, London: Jessica Kingsley.

This is the text book that examines the issues that arise on a daily basis when caring for children in substitute care that I have been waiting for. Reading it was akin to being immersed in a warm bath! Theory is integrated throughout in an accessible and non-threatening way and applied to everyday opportunities for supporting and promoting the development of children and young people.

Chapter 2 on ‘The Developing Person’ contextualises normative stages of development with a helpful overview on what threatens such progress. This different approach to widely recognised theoretical models is also noticeable in Chapter 3, ‘Tuning In and Attachment’ where time is taken to explore the challenges faced when working with those who reject caring attempts. In addressing issues in this way, the book manages to challenge and develop the knowledge base of the learner whilst retaining the message that it is Ok to not always get things right. Of great value was this practical guidance offered across a range of subject areas.

The challenges often presented by caring for children and young people who have experienced trauma in early life are acknowledged and the common feelings engendered in the carer are referred to throughout. Chapter 4 on ‘Healing and Containment’ considered ways to work with unintegrated children. The authors manage to do this in a reassuring way whilst always retaining a primary focus on the provision of good care for children. Some of the basic concepts which underpin the provision of group care were covered in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and I particularly liked the naming of Chapter 6 ‘Memory Keepers’ which covered a range of issues not always written about in relation to the provision of alternative forms of care. Changes to value-based language came through time after time, and Chapter 10 ‘Working with Pain-Based Behaviour’ was particularly helpful in teaching us to reframe some of the terminology that we use.

Additionally, the sensitive way in which topics often ignored in texts, for example, Touch (Chapter 8), the negative feeling of workers, etc., were raised and dealt with was commendable. A fresh approach to examining communication was provided in Chapter 9 with a particularly helpful discourse on rules for relationships and the testing out of them by children. The notion of creating a healing home through provision of care based on developing relationships remained core throughout, with the importance of bridging between the care setting and the real world being emphasised particularly in Chapter 11. Opportunities for supporting development through the process of giving 24-hour care are reinforced. This is a text that I would definitely recommend for residential workers and foster carers, however, experienced they might be. For academics it offers a refreshing and modern perspective on aspects of therapeutic working. This is the book that every carer and academic with experience

and interest in working with children and young people would have liked to write!

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