

Book Review:

UnTherapy: A Positive Psychology for Enlightened Living

Author: Sunny Massad, Ph.D.

Published 2010: 180 pages

Reviewer: Brian Samo Ross

Author of Talking to God Without Calling Long Distance

I've read quite a few self-help books over the years. So when I was asked to review UnTherapy by Dr. Sunny Massad, I hesitated before saying yes.

I didn't believe that this little book could offer me anything new. I was wrong.

Massad offers her readers a revolutionary perspective. UnTherapy is a profound, yet gentle read.

As the name implies, UnTherapy doesn't look at our psychology in the traditional way. It is not written for people who need to sit on the therapist's couch to tell their tales of woe. Instead, it presents several ideas that will inspire the reader to expand their comfort zone, all for a happy cause: their own sense of well being.

Think you're so broken that you can't be fixed? Not so, says Massad.

"Psychological culture assumes that painful early life experiences result in irreversible wounds and damaging emotional after effects for the rest of one's life."

"(But) suffering does not arise because of problems. It arises because of aversion and resistance to experiences that are deemed to be problems."

When it comes to early life traumas, Massad knows of what she speaks. When she was just 11 years old, she witnessed her mother, who was later diagnosed with paranoid-schizophrenia and bipolar disease, being taken away in a strait-jacket. Her favorite aunt committed suicide and her grandmother spent much of her life in and out of institutions. Rather than see herself as a victim of her dysfunctional childhood, she viewed it as an opportunity to grow.

"Studies show that people who were deeply hurt as children are capable of tremendous resilience." says Massad. "It is my contention that if I can transcend the fallout of family dysfunction and personal adversities, then you surely can too."

All trauma aside, UnTherapy was written for "highly functional adults who want to live richer lives that are more in tune with their highest values." Or put another way, it's for ordinary people who want to create extraordinary lives.

Massad describes UnTherapy as a handbook; and it is. Throughout the book she includes simple, yet crafty exercises that are designed to change the way you think about yourself, your judgments and your “issues.” The exercises force us to take responsibility for ourselves, to be our own nurturing parent and best friend.

We are all neurotic in one way or another. It’s just part of the human condition. UnTherapy teaches us to accept our neurosis with compassion, while not letting it rule our lives.

“Enlightened living is not the absence of neurosis but rather the ability to come to peace with your humanness so that your soul can shout “this is who I am!”

I encourage you to treat UnTherapy as a meditation. Make yourself a pot of tea. Curl up in your favorite chair. Read it slowly. There are golden nuggets of wisdom contained within these pages and you don’t want to miss a single one.