Book Reviews


Martin Seligman, PhD, is a high-powered psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania. If we didn’t sense he is very bright from the riveting contents of this book and his erudite exegesis, we couldn’t miss it from his reports of his sterling achievements in developing research and teaching programs confirming a rainbow spectrum of approaches and benefits with positive psychology.

Many therapists consider a decrease in negativity to be the way to establish positivity. Seligman makes it clear that this is just an important first step. Once we have cleared the decks of stress, traumas, and other issues, we are then better able to refocus on specific ways to build more and more positivity into our lives.

Throughout the book, Seligman methodically presents theories addressing emotions, engagement, and meaning in positive relationships. All of these are supported in a wealth of research, to which Seligman himself, his students, and other researchers who worked with him have made many important contributions.

I also resonated strongly with Seligman’s discussion of the poor choices being made in many countries that invest primarily in building the gross domestic product rather than in studying, teaching and promoting wellbeing. Research confirms that beyond an income that provides for the basics of one’s needs, further income does not significantly enhance a sense of wellbeing. On the contrary, it makes people slaves to the clock and to work, seeking ever more income in the hopes of enhancing their wellbeing. Financial prosperity leads to diminished satisfactions from relationships, friends and family, and less sense of wellbeing. These findings, as with many of the issues Seligman discusses, are supported by extensive research in many countries around the world.

Interestingly, happiness is more contagious than depression. And with the attitudes and approaches detailed in this book, depression, illness and even cancer can produce a sense of mastery and survival as one learns to deal with them successfully, paying attention to developing and enhancing wellbeing and positive attitudes along the way.
Readers can also take an abbreviated version of the Signature Strengths Test provided in the book, to get a light sense of where we sit in our spectrum of strengths. A link is also provided to an online version of the full version of this test.

The index is one of the most extensive and detailed listings of contents I have ever seen. It significantly adds to the readers’ engagement with the wealth of materials in this book. And 50 pages of Notes provide ample references to follow up on items of interest.

For anyone interested in happiness and wellbeing, I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

I regret in reading this book is that I didn’t come across it much sooner!

There is an unfortunate omission from this book, however, in my opinion. There is no mention of the Energy Psychology methods such as Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), Thought Field Therapy (TFT), and others included in the Association for Energy Psychology (ACEP). This is entirely understandable, however. At the time of publication of Flourish, there weren’t sufficient research studies confirming the efficacy of these approaches. Recent reviews have shown a robust body of evidence confirming their abilities to enhance health and happiness, as well as to relieve stress, traumas, pains of all sorts and more (Feinstein, 2018).


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Book review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
IJHC Editor-in-Chief


Philippine Isler is a wise, caring person and astute psychotherapist. In this easy-reading book he leads us through the gateway of mindfulness meditation into the world of wholistic awarenesses and healing. His focus is on helping us make the best possible decisions in all areas of our life, with the help of our inner wisdom, in five steps.

Starting with mindfulness meditation, focused on our breath, we connect with other sensations in our body, learning what our normal, quiet, resting baseline of awareness is. Then we expand our awarenesses to other inner sensations. Having established our normal inner awarenesses, we can then focus on questions or issues that we want to clarify in our lives, identifying inner awarenesses that gives us a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ to our questions.

Isler explains each step in clear detail, enabling us to learn and apply this process in order to access our inner wisdom for guidance in our lives.

In my experience as a wholistic psychotherapist, and as a teacher and supervisor for other therapists, I find that these approaches work wonderfully well and relatively quickly for sensitive people who are
naturally in touch with their inner selves, and who find the identification of their inner awarenesses easy to access. Others, who come to these methods from a more left-brain, thinking orientation to the world may need to practice each step for a while in order to master these methods.

Regardless of the above, there are many studies on the benefits of mindfulness meditation on many aspects of wholistic health and healing. I find that the addition of practical uses for mindfulness, as in connecting with inner messages, can enhance motivation to meditate and the effectiveness of the meditation.

Also very helpful are Eisler’s observations and discussions on the processes, outcomes and consequences of decision making. This is extremely helpful information for anyone finding themselves challenged in making decisions.

This book is warmly recommended.

Supplementing the materials in this book, here are references on meditation research, confirming statistically significant modest results for stress, anxiety, wellbeing, pain and cancer.


Book review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM, IJHC Editor-in-Chief

Deborah D. Miller, PhD. (2014). *The Dragon with Flames of Love: Helping Children with Serious Illness Improve the Quality of their Lives*. Self published. 90 pp. $22.95

Deborah Miller was invited to work with children with cancer in a hospital in 2007. Since then she has made this her full-time job. She teaches children, their families and hospital staff how to tap away symptoms and troublesome emotions, and how to tap in positive expectations, attitudes and expectations, using Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), an Energy Psychology (EP) method.

With EFT, you tap on a series of acupressure points on the head, chest and hand, while focusing your mind on whatever issues you wish to address. This rapidly enables you to reduce negative symptoms.
Miller describes how tapping improves physical and psychological healing, enables children to manage their anxieties and other feelings, and install hope.

Tapping can help more than providing just symptomatic release. Ordinarily, children and their families feel helpless to deal with their own problems in the hospital, which engenders hopelessness and sometimes even despair. Children and family members come to know they have tools to manage their emotions. It gives them hope that their experiences of illness and hospitalization will be manageable.

Numerous hospital procedures and experiences create tensions and fears – including needles, spinal taps, surgery and post-surgical issues, negative feelings about doctors, meds and difficult treatments, side effects of medications and more. The experiences of children and their families with all of these can be markedly gentled.

Hospital staff are also trained in tapping, so they understand the benefits it offer their child patients along with family members. Staff report markedly enhanced interactions and compliance when tapping is used. The whole atmosphere can be transformed on units where tapping is done. Beyond symptom relief, Miller finds that tapping creates a cheerful attitude, which improves the immune system and enhances effects of treatments.

Parents feel empowered when they can tap with their children, and if their children are despondent or in a bad mood, parents can help them tap away their worries and fears.

Miller does an excellent job of providing detailed instructions, such as age specific languaging, along with suggestions for a spectrum of issues that can be addressed with common hospital procedures and specific approaches for varieties of problems commonly seen in children treated for cancers.

An aid in tapping is a teddy bear with buttons Excellent examples of children using EFT and their Tappy Bear for pain. Not only is this a comfortable soft companion, it also has small buttons sewn onto it to remind the children of the specific EFT point to tap on.

Kids also take pleasure and are proud to be able to teach other kids and their families how to tap.

Miller provides an excellent spectrum of case examples, with details about various phrases that were used to help children with a broad spectrum of problems. Wonderful, cheerful illustrations of children counterbalance pictures of children facing their hospital challenges.

This book is highly recommended for children of all ages who are facing daunting, anxiety-provoking, and often painful hospital experiences.

Book review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
IJHC Editor-in-Chief
Daniel J. Benor, MD, Editor-in-Chief, IJHC

Dr. Benor has edited the IJHC for 18 years. He is author of Seven Minutes to Pain Relief; of Healing Research, Volumes I-III and of many articles on wholistic healing. He offers Wholistic Healing with the method called TWR/ WHEE locally in Guelph, ON, Canada and worldwide via phone and Skype.

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