



Recovery From Trauma, Addiction, or Both: Strategies for Finding Your Best Self

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BOOK REVIEWS



Lisa M. Najavits. (2017). *Recovery From Trauma, Addiction, or Both: Strategies for Finding Your Best Self*. New York, NY: Guilford, 277 pp. Paperback, \$16.95 ISBN: 9781462521982.

Lisa M. Najavits, the author of *Seeking Safety*, is a well-known educator, clinician, and researcher. *Recovery From Trauma, Addiction, or Both* is the result of more than 25 years of clinical experience reinforced by research on trauma and addiction. This book provides tremendous help both for professionals and their patients. In the process of working on the book, Najavits gave pages of her work to patients in her clinical practice and asked them for feedback. Many patients shared responses in writing, which are now included as integral parts of the text. The author's conversation with the reader, along with the narratives of people in recovery, create a sense of community or group therapy that can be achieved just by opening the book. Because reading about trauma and addiction can yield troublesome emotions and reactions, Najavits begins by discussing how to stay safe through the process of self-discovery. While learning the signs of trauma, the reader is advised to create a crisis plan and build a safety net. Discussing barriers to recovery, the author explains how certain beliefs concerning trauma and addiction treatment have changed in recent years. She describes these changes as "surprises." For example, today we believe that we can treat trauma and addiction at the same time, and we do not support confrontation in addiction treatment.

After the introduction, Najavits explains the nature of trauma and addiction and how the two interact. Each of the 35 separate chapters addresses a specific issue, some informative and others interactive. Reading the book is like going through therapy sessions with a client, sometimes moving forward, other times returning to already processed material with a different approach to a topic. Every dimension of life is discussed—language, thinking, belief system, behavior, mind and body relationship, pain, motivation and its lack—in response to the experience of trauma and addiction and the changes that are possible during recovery. The underlying argument of the book is that clients, step by step, focusing on different aspects of their lives, can determine how they think, feel, and behave. Najavits offers them information, exercises, and examples of recovery work given by people who share their stories. She

helps readers to recognize their responses to trauma and how those responses are intertwined with addiction. After developing an awareness of the problem, she shows how to build new responses and behaviors with the application of healthy thinking, attitudes, new skills, and behavior. Chapter 12 presents a list of 84 safe coping skills, drawn largely from *Seeking Safety*. One of the coping skills is a reminder, taken from the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, that “no feeling is final.” The day-by-day recovery process, with its successes and setbacks, is structured around long-term goals that each client is guided to imagine, verbalize, and cherish.

Those in recovery can use this book as a self-help textbook, as a guide through the therapy process that includes specific suggestions about how to find a good counselor and identify the most suitable treatment program. Professionals will recognize and appreciate the flexibility of the material and how it allows them to apply different therapeutic methods and approaches, including mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and existential and past-focused trauma counseling. There are four appendices in the book. The first is for those who want to help people in recovery from trauma and addiction. The second lists relevant resources, and the third presents the scale of excessive behaviors that help us identify behavioral problems. The last appendix is a quiz of the reader’s knowledge concerning trauma and addiction, along with answers and accompanying explanations. The quiz can be used before and after reading the book, as part of an effort to gauge what has been learned during the recovery process. Najavits’s goal is that those who read this book will use it as a self-help tool to transform their pain and despair into a mission of compassion. The book is likely to prove most helpful to those in recovery and to professionals working with this population.

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David B. Rosengren. (2016). *Building Motivational Interviewing Skills: A Practitioner Workbook* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford, 513 pages, softcover, \$50.

Rarely does one find a book that includes information about the philosophy of a model as well as practical exercises to expand a practitioner’s skills and abilities. David B. Rosengren’s *Building Motivational Interviewing Skills: A Practitioner’s Workbook* (2nd ed.) is an exception to the rule. Rosengren provides a practical, extensive look into the Motivational Interviewing model and skill-building process. He guides the reader through a step-by-step process to build proficiency in a way that no standard textbook can. Although the

basic structure of the chapters remains the same as in the original text, the second edition of the workbook expands the number of practice exercises and content for each of the skill areas. The book is akin to having a “trainer in a bottle” to support the reader’s Motivational Interviewing (MI) learning process.

The book speaks to a wide range of readers involved in the implementation of MI. The book’s audience includes the student initially encountering MI; the experienced clinician using the skills in clinical practice; the supervisor providing feedback and coaching to support the practice; and the instructor providing education, consultation, and experiential learning opportunities. The workbook does not require any prior knowledge in the MI model, nor is it essential that a person has read the Miller and Rollnick (2013) text.

Each chapter is organized to teach an aspect of the Motivational Interviewing model using a specific structure throughout the course of the book. This structure begins with a brief description of the skills, concept, and issue to resolve, including an illustration to conceptualize the challenge. An in-depth discussion of the concepts and underlying actions of the skills follows. For each of the skills, the volume includes a Concept Quiz to test comprehension and provide feedback on knowledge acquisition. The author invites the practitioner to engage in specific exercises, both individual and partner work, to build familiarity and skills for each of the concepts. The book includes 182 pages of electronic resources (not offered in the previous edition) that can be printed for personal use or use with clients. A final, brief section wraps up the concepts detailed in the reading and exercise work. This section is similar to a concluding discussion after a training exercise to offer additional ideas or examples before moving on to the next concept. The book’s structure allows for a self-guided education process that appears, on the surface, to be supportive of the learning process. Following the skill-building chapters, the author includes information about how people learn MI and how to build a learning community. The learning community is presented to help practitioners develop implementation strategies. The second edition of this workbook is a formidable complement to the Miller and Rollnick (2013) text and worthy of any practitioner’s library.

REFERENCES

- Miller W. R., & Rollnick S. (2013). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change* (3rd ed.). NY: Guilford Press.

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