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Motivational Career Counselling & Coaching

SUMMARY: This book combines CBT with career counselling principles to provide practical, useful and easy to use models and scenarios perfect for new or seasoned career practitioners. It covers the whole range of clients, from clients in education to those who are unemployed. Finishing off with how the career practitioner can ensure their own mental wellbeing in order to provide the best service.

ADAPTING SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY AND PRACTICE FOR USE WITHIN CAREER COUNSELLING AND COACHING.

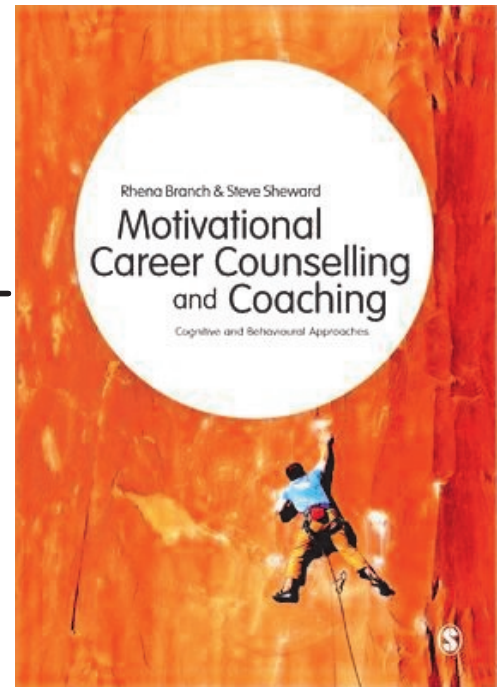
Providing clear, practical strategies

“People are not disturbed by things but by the views which they take of them”
Epictetus (c. 55-135 AD)
pg. 2

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is a scientifically proven behaviour therapy, and has been used extensively in the UK as a treatment for mental health issues and in successfully facilitating the move of people from incapacity benefits back into full time work. This book uses CBT, positive psychology and collaborative problem solving and action planning, and adapts it to be used by career counsellors to support their clients. Providing people with support during increasing times of economic uncertainty requires this unique set of skills.

What is CBT?

CBT provides a framework for career counsellors and their clients to follow. It states that people are responsible for the way they react to certain situations. In the quote above, Epictetus is saying that we have the power to choose how we let situations affect us. He was born a slave and eventually found freedom, remaining stoic throughout. CBT outlines ways of dealing with future stresses by facing emotionally & behaviourally challenging situations and deciding upon the best way to deal with them.



C = Cognitive - all mental processes
B = Behaviour - everything we do and how we respond
T = Therapy - method for overcoming a problem



About the Authors

Steve Sheward is qualified as both a Career Counsellor and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist. He has worked as a senior manager within career services for over 10 years. Steve currently works in London for the National Health Service as a High Intensity CBT Therapist.

Rhena Branch is a CBT therapist. She has her own private practice in North London. She has worked in a variety of settings including alcohol and drug rehabilitation centres, NHS settings and with the Priory Hospital.

CBT and Career Counselling

CBT has a large research base and has been successfully used by the UK NHS for a number of years to deal with a range of psychological problems, including: addictions, depression, personality disorders, PTSD, and relationship problems. The CBT used in this book is adapted from the original theory devised by Albert Ellis and Aaron T. Beck (1963) and placed in the context of career counseling. It focusses more on finding the best way to deal with common problems of life, such as interview stresses, unemployment, and redundancy, and achieve more desirable outcomes.

CBT recognizes we are influenced and affected by our past and present environment and that it has some effect on the way we act, think, and feel. However, even though we are often unable to change our environment, we can change how we feel by changing the way we think and behave. Figure 1 shows how these processes and the environment interact with each other and how closely related they are, in the 5-areas model. There is also an example from the book that shows how the areas are linked and can influence each other.

"it is often not so much what happens to us in life that makes us happy or sad - it is frequently our perception of events that affects our feelings" Pg. 7

By becoming more aware of how thoughts, feelings, behaviours and psychological responses are linked, clients can be more aware of how their flaws affect their success and can develop better strategies to achieve their goals.

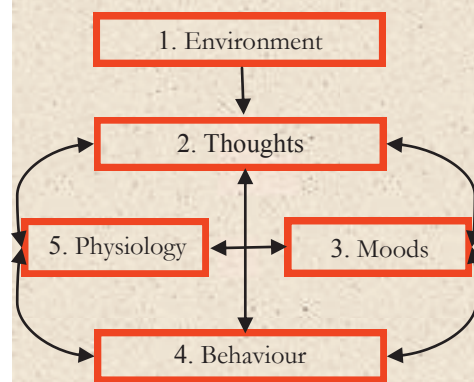
In addition to the 5-areas model, the ABCDE model (figure 2) also helps to determine any barriers clients may experience in trying to achieve their goals. It takes it further by outlining practical strategies for career practitioners to take to enable clients to succeed and achieve their professional and personal goals.

There are online resources available with the book, providing a method to analyse a clients' problems and to teach clients to analyse their own. Using the 'emotions table' provided on page 17 you can assist clients in changing their thinking from 'unhelpful' to 'helpful'. For example, a client may be *anxious* about attending an interview. There is a lot of pressure to succeed and to be offered the position, but being anxious is a negative, unhelpful emotion. The book provides assistance to career practitioners to shift a clients thinking to a more helpful emotion of *concern* about the interview. This changes the client's behaviour from being withdrawn physically from the threat to facing up to the threat & dealing with it constructively.

The purpose of the helping profession is: "seeing problem management as life-enhancing learning and treating all encounters with clients as opportunity-development sessions that are part of the positive psychology approach."

Pg. 4

Egan, 2010



Pg. 5

Figure 1. The 5-areas model

Example

A client attending a job interview may have thought, "I'll say something stupid at the interview" (**thought**). This thought might make them feel anxious (**mood**) which may lead them to act in a nervous manner (**behaviour**) and they may feel their heart beating fast (**physiology**) Pg. 6

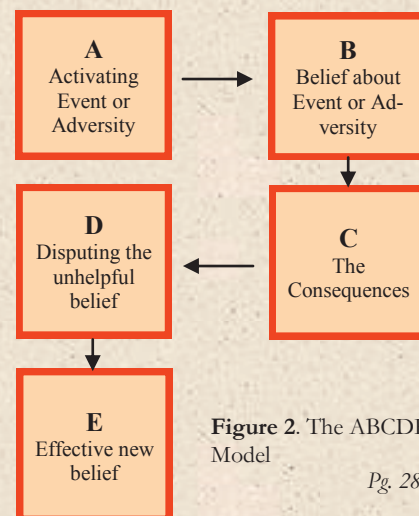


Figure 2. The ABCDE Model

Pg. 28

Socratic questioning is used in CBT to enable clients to solve their own problems, with guidance and the right questions from career practitioners. Instead of the career counsellor simply telling the client that they shouldn't think or act in a certain way, the authors suggest using questions to help clients see the flaw in their thinking. There are 2 ways to use the approach:

- ▶ That neither you nor the client have the right answer, but you collaboratively explore options through a series of questions and answers
- ▶ The counsellor sees the possible solution ahead, and leads the client to this solution through a series of guided questions, instead of simply telling them the solution

Although this is a sound method, the career counsellor needs to ensure the client does not feel interrogated.

“Let the client’s brain take the strain” pg. 33

Once clients have a more effective outlook on their situations, they may accept this but still have hidden concerns about putting it into action. This is because they have achieved intellectual insight into their issue, but not emotional insight. They need to now think and act consistently with their new attitude, even when under pressure. The ‘zig-zag’ technique can help by encouraging the client to attack and defend their new strategy and can be found in detail on page 33. The more confident and comfortable a client becomes in challenging their outlook, the more emotional insight they will gain.

Enabling Clients to Succeed at Interview

There are 2 levels to a career practitioners work with a client; work involving elements within the client’s **external** range of control (researching the company, practicing interview questions) and those which are within the client’s **internal** range of control. In order to assess the client’s state of mind about the interview, and to allow them to identify the negative thoughts they have prior to attending an interview, a 5-area review could be completed (as described in figure 1 of this review) or, less informally, a collaborative brain storm on a piece of paper to elicit their feelings, followed by a Socratic dialogue. Once one of the above techniques has been carried out with the client, a set of ‘helpful’ behaviours is outlined and a strategy put into place about how to be more successful in the interview. Clients may feel awkward putting the new behaviour into practice, as it feels unnatural and very different from how they would normally act. This is normal and will start to subside as they are put into action more frequently. The ‘as if’ exercise can help with initial uncomfortable feelings (figure 3).

Most people find interviews unpleasant and stressful, both before and during the event. With a lot often riding on the result, it is understandable

“When we or our clients feel the onset of anxiety, we experience a primitive emotion that signals danger even if this response may not be appropriate to modern day situations that are challenging but not life threatening” pg. 49

that people would feel anxious. This feeling, however, can have a negative impact on the client’s performance. It is important that career counsellors are able to work

with clients to normalize the experience of anxiety, and bring it down to a ‘healthy concern’ for a desired outcome. In order to be able to do this, career practitioners should know how anxiety works.

Figure 3. ‘As If’ Exercise

- ▶ Encouraging client to practice their new behaviours *in spite* of feeling awkward in the knowledge that their confidence will grow the longer they do it
- ▶ Requires a leap of faith
- ▶ “Fake it until you make it”
- ▶ The way they act will affect the way they think and feel

There are a number of ways to enable clients to deal with anxiety before and during interviews:

- ▶ Accepting anxiety
- ▶ Acknowledging anxiety
- ▶ Relaxing and focusing on breathing

Worries becomes dysfunctional when they spiral out of control and clients lose their specific focus on what needs to be done, pg. 53

Even with lots of hard work with a client, when people have nothing to occupy their minds they will engage in random worry. Although a negative emotion, worry serves a useful purpose - it is a call to action (pg. 53). It makes sure we revise for an exam instead of watching TV. However, sometimes it can get out of control and become a more serious, medical issue. To help clients with this the 'worry tree' can be a useful tool (pg. 51), which helps people distinguish between problems that can be dealt with constructively and those which are beyond the client's control, one issue at a time. The emphasis is on using the emotion of worrying as a catalyst for problem-solving.

By encouraging clients to take their attention away from themselves in the run up to, and at the interview, and focusing most of their efforts on the task and the environment, the result will be less anxiety. This is called 'task concentration' (figure 4).

A good way to start the discussion on this topic with a client is to look at all the other times that they manage to block out unwelcome distractions on a daily basis, like chatting to a friend in a noisy coffee shop, completing assignments for a deadline when you don't feel 100%. It becomes obvious to the client that they are able to focus their attention when there is a significant reason to do so, and probably some kind of reward, like spending quality time with your friend or obtaining a good mark in your work.

Interviews in the future can cause anxiety in a client, as they begin to imagine what may happen, because they are unfamiliar. Imagery is used a lot in CBT, and using visualization techniques to mentally rehearse attending the interview can ease the client into the situation, as the mind does not distinguish between events that are real and those that are imagined (pg. 56).



Figure 4. The three areas requiring focus of attention

Finally, a good night's sleep can help people to perform their best and to remember and successfully implement all that they have prepared with their career practitioner. However, placing too much emphasis on 'getting a good night's sleep or I won't be able to do a good job' can often have the opposite effect and lead to issue falling asleep.

Supporting Clients in Decision Making

Gerard Egan's *The Skilled Helper* (2002) stresses 3 important processes in decision making (pg. 64):

- ▶ Information gathering
- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Making a choice

When it comes to making a choice, clients can be encouraged to make a cost and benefit analysis (CBA). There are online resources included with the book about designing a CBA. When looking at the decision making process as a whole, it may be useful to use the FIRST model (pg. 67). The benefit of this model is it provides a framework to ensure that both client and practitioner don't get lost in the process, particularly if the length of time you have with a client is short.

**F
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T**

Focus - establish a rapport with client, express expectations of the session for both parties, prioritize key objectives

Information - ensuring your client has accurate information and helping them see when they are looking at things in a subjective way

Realism - making sure your client achieves what they are capable of and enabling them to accept certain limitations and the sense of disappointment that may bring

Scope - forming contingency plans, particularly if clients have highly competitive ambitions. It will reassure the client that they have other irons in the fire and help to reduce stress

pg 67 **Tactics** - formulating goals that clients can remain committed to and stand a chance of achieving, they should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound (SMART)

Once the client and the career practitioner have devised SMART goals, it is important that the client maintain motivation towards those goals. It is common for enthusiasm to diminish over time, and for that reason it is important that appropriate contingency plans are made against any pre-determined hurdles.

Building a compelling vision of the future is one way to help maintain motivation in a client to achieve goals. Imagining the future can give them a sense of direction and the confidence needed to take the steps to achieve their goals. This vision can be further compelled by helping clients to identify their personal values. If a clients personal values are aligned with their chosen career path, then they are more likely to experience career satisfaction. This is thought to be linked to the ‘theory of flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991 - pg. 77).

Flow is a ‘state of complete absorption in what you are doing, resulting in a deep sense of satisfaction and achievement’ (pg. 76) and is what people often refer to as ‘being in the zone’. Csikszentmihalyi carried out an experiment measuring individuals’ experience of flow during work and leisure time using an experience sampling method (ESM). The results showed that people experience a greater level of flow at work rather than in leisure time. Seligman (2002) proposed that this finding is most likely a result of the most popular past-time in the U.S. of watching TV, and that the average mood when watching TV is mildly depressed, and that at work people are participating in challenging and absorbing flow activities. There is much literature around

“It will help your client to remain focused on achieving their goal if they are able to remind themselves of the reason for committing to it in the first place” *pg. 72*

“if we take shortcuts to gratification without exercising our far more complex array of skills and virtues, we run the risk of starving to death spiritually in the midst of great material wealth” *pg. 78*

work and how it offers us an opportunity to practice our ‘innately human skills and achieve greater satisfaction in life’ (pg. 78). Seligman states that work allows us to ‘express our human virtues and to experience flow’ (pg. 78), and the best way to do that is through employment that is aligned with our personal values. The book outlines online resources that can be used to help clients find their personal values. If they can then find work that allows them to express these values they will have more job satisfaction. They could also use the results of the personal value identifying test to re-engineer

their job to fit with these values - perhaps a discussion for an appraisal or performance review.

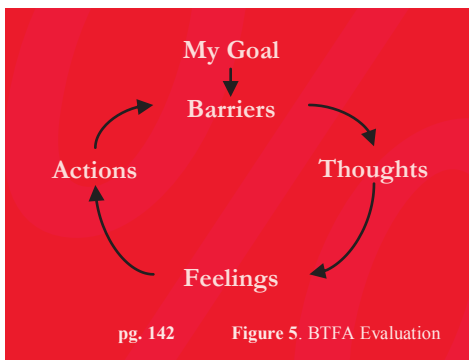
Supporting Clients in Education

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has influenced educational policy in both the US and the UK. Research on the subject shows that if pupils have a better self-awareness and empathy there is an increase in motivation, classroom behaviour and in predicting academic success. Implementing EI strategies within educational settings in conjunction with cognitive behavioural techniques provides a powerful combination for helping learners to succeed. Career counsellors are tasked with raising aspirations in students and helping them have a more positive outlook on themselves and their academic abilities. There is emphasis placed on making the student self-sufficient by increasing their self-efficacy, instead of the career counsellor being viewed as the expert.

It is important that career counsellors guide students through problem solving exercises in order for them to be able to overcome barriers to achieving their educational and vocational goals. The book details an exercise for this, which is based on the 5-areas model previously detailed:

The 5 Domains of EI:

- **Self-awareness** - understanding own response to situations, and regulating it
- **Emotional control** - managing our lives efficiently by using strategies to manage emotions
- **Self-motivation** - managing our emotions to achieve a positive outcome
- **Empathy** - recognizing others feelings and putting yourself in their shoes
- **Handling relationships** - preventing or resolving conflicts. Similar to empathy
pg.138



Stage 1: Help the client to clearly define their educational/vocational goal

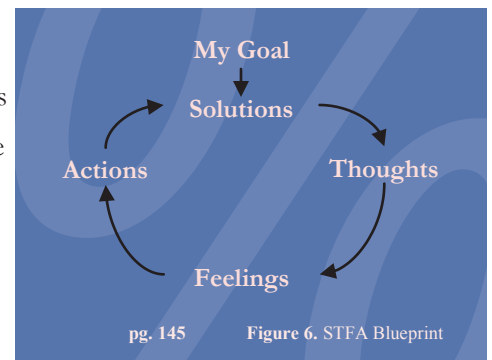
Stage 2: Complete a barriers, thoughts, feelings, actions (BTFA) evaluation (figure 5)

Stage 3: Obtain commitment by completing a cost and benefit analysis (CBA)

Stage 4: Help the client overcome their barriers by teaching problem solving skills

Stage 5: Complete a solutions, thoughts, feelings, actions (STFA) blueprint (figure 6)

This chapter ends with a method to try and work around peoples' low frustration tolerance (LFT), which is one of the main reasons why clients do not succeed in achieving their goals. Any worthwhile activity will involve some level of emotional or mental discomfort or strain. Often when people feel this way they will give up or avoid the activity. By using a metaphor or imagery to approach the subject with a client, they are more likely to connect emotionally and invest personal meaning in it.



Reflective Practice and Using Assessment and Self-help Tools

In the UK, little notice has been paid to the process or outcome of career counseling, nor the quality of the experience. It is therefore difficult to evaluate the success of an individual career practitioner, unless there are ways set out to do this.

Possibilities of evaluation include:

- ▶ Recording sessions (with prior consent) and playing back with a supervisor
- ▶ Feedback and advice from supervisor on your practice of contracting with clients

"If evaluation occurs at the end, it is too late"
(Egan, 2002)
pg. 157

If there are no official means of evaluating your professional practice available, then *reflective practice* is a good option. This often involves keeping a log or diary of interactions with clients in all parts of the session and then discussing best practice with others at a later date. It is also useful to relate your experiences to a set of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of your work. The authors have modified the revised cognitive therapy scale (CTS-R) set forth by the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) to fit within the career practitioner setting.

The scores in figure 7 can be used to evaluate performance in the following areas:

- ▶ Agenda-setting and adherence
- ▶ Feedback
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Pacing and effective use of time
- ▶ Interpersonal effectiveness
- ▶ Eliciting appropriate emotional expression
- ▶ Eliciting key cognitions
- ▶ Eliciting behaviours
- ▶ Guided discovery
- ▶ Conceptual integration
- ▶ Application of change methods
- ▶ Homework setting



Figure 7. The Revised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Scale (CTS-R):

- 0 = absence of feature, or highly inappropriate performance
 - 1 = inappropriate performance, with major problems evident
 - 2 = evidence of competence, but numerous problems and lack of consistency
 - 3 = Competent, but some problems or inconsistencies
 - 4 = Good features, but minor problems/inconsistencies
 - 5 = Very good features, minimal problems/inconsistencies
 - 6 = Excellent performance, or very good even in the face of client difficulties
- pg. 158*



A final way of assessing the success of sessions for clients is to ask for feedback from them. This can be in the form of an anonymous survey, to ensure objective feedback. This could also be repeated 3 or more months down the line to see how effective the advice and learning was in the longer term. Once you have identified what the feedback is telling you, it is important to then integrate that knowledge into your practice in order to improve. The authors suggest using ‘Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle’ (Kolb & Fry, 1975), in order to learn from the feedback (figure 8).

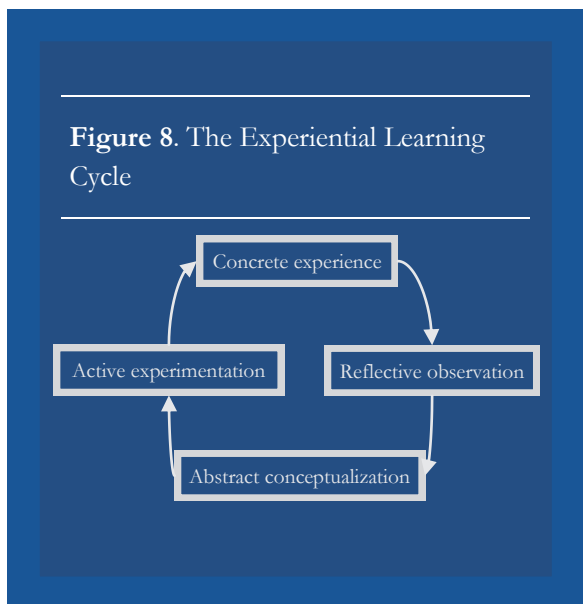


Figure 8. The Experiential Learning Cycle

In terms of assessment tools for use with clients, psychometric tests have traditionally been used in career and guidance approaches. Some of the more common ones include:

- ▶ The strong interest inventory (Harmon, Hanson, Borgen & Hammer, 1994)
- ▶ The Minnesota importance questionnaire (Rounds, Henley, Dawis, Lofquist & Weiss, 1981)
- ▶ The 16-factor personality questionnaire (16PF) (Cattell, Eber & Tatsuoka, 1970)
- ▶ The career maturity inventory (CMI) (Crites, 1978)
- ▶ The career development inventory (CDI) (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan & Myers, 1981) - (all references pg. 167)

As most of these tests often require a person to hold some formal certification (in the UK, it's a certification from the British Psychological Society), turning

to less formal tools is often more convenient. The ‘Wheel of Life’ model (figure 9) provides an overview of a client’s circumstances, and can be used to measure progress in areas after counseling and CBT approaches.

A client would insert the areas they wish to work on in the blank boxes and rate where they see themselves at the start on a scale of 1-5. This provides a visual representation of the session goals, and shows the areas most in need of work. A second wheel can be completed at the end of the sessions to see progress made. A positive outcome would be an expansion of the plotted pattern towards the outside of the wheel (pg. 168).

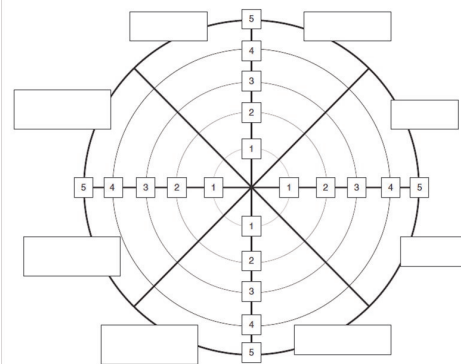


Figure 9. The wheel of life

Career Counselling and Coaching for Self-care

Interestingly, although career counsellors spend a lot of time ensuring others are mentally cared for, they often overlook their own mental wellbeing. This is a theme that I have seen a lot in much of the literature around the subject of career counseling. It is extensively explored in Egan's *The Skilled Helper* (2002). In order to avoid a large deterioration in mental wellbeing towards

Early signs of 'burnout':

- Deterioration in physical and mental wellbeing
- Over-empathy or lack of empathy
- Lack of enthusiasm and energy

pg. 186

'burnout', early warning signs should be taken seriously. Work related challenges can be addressed by carrying out an ABC analysis and a CBA, mentioned earlier in the book.

There are other ways to ensure self-care, including caring for your physical wellbeing; maintaining a work-life balance; investing time in relationships; investing in personal development; and protecting your emotional wellbeing. The book also draws on the effectiveness of

meditation as a way of nurturing the mind. A career counsellor's mind is the 'tool of their trade', and thus requires regular maintenance. Meditation is particularly useful as it does not need to have religion attached to it, and so it can be practiced by people of different faiths. Mindfulness helps you to conserve mental and emotional energy, and to focus on the here and now.

"the practice of mindfulness is about focusing one's attention on what is happening here and now - right this instant - without letting the mind drift to thoughts about the future or past" (pg. 193).

Evaluation

I found this book to be of particular use for my professional practice, and gained a lot of insightful information and strategies as a person relatively new to this field. I feel that the theory would be applicable in a school setting for a guidance counsellor or a regular classroom teacher helping a student through a personal problem, in a university or in prisons. The book was well written and researched and incredibly easy to understand and apply the theory to practice because of the extensive examples and scenarios. The authors draw on information presented by other leaders in the field, such as Gerald Egan (author of *The Skilled Helper*), whose text is used extensively in counseling courses worldwide. The sequence of the book was logical, and built on the concepts presented in the first chapter. The culminating chapter on looking after your own mental and physical wellbeing as a career counsellor could be applied to many other positions, including teachers, to avoid or recognize the signs of stress and burnout. Becoming immersed in the lives of others and taking their worries home with us is not a burden only of career practitioners. We have all been moved emotionally, at one time or another, by the details of the lives others lead, particularly those of young people.

The book has received good reviews from others in the field of career education, although the number of reviews out there was quite small. However, as a relatively new text this could be the reason for the lack of reviews. The general consensus was that the book was well written and researched, was easy to apply to career practitioners work because of the extensive scenarios and was logical in its structure. It isn't viewed as a ground breaking text however, but more a reminder of good practice for seasoned counsellors and a useful starting point for beginners.

My only concern with this book is whether the information would be accessible to the North American audience, as there are frequent references to the UK. I personally didn't find this a problem, as all of the organizations and policies were familiar to me, particularly as I worked in a school setting in the UK, but others may. As both of the authors are British there are obvious reasons for these references. However, I think another reason for the numerous references to the UK is a result of a big drive there to help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, those with anger problems, and those with low literacy levels in schools to succeed, and that most of *that* research is from the UK. Only recently on the BBC website was an article detailing that young adults in England have the lowest level of literacy and numeracy in the industrialized world (retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-24433320> (9/10/2013)).

For my practice, I would have liked to have seen more information about how to handle tight job markets and how to motivate clients who are not just unemployed, but underemployed. With the teaching market as it is, it can be difficult to present a truthful picture and maintain enthusiasm and hope. Additionally, strategies for those who have realized that the career they are currently training for is not for them, and have no direction, would have been helpful.

In summary, this was an easy and pleasant book to read, full of useful information, examples, and tips for those in the field of career counseling and further.