

similar across aphasia in typical and atypical aphasia, but evidence from cognitive neuropsychological studies of aphasic language disorder suggest that the same surface symptom can result from quite different underlying processing difficulties. For example, Basso and Rusconi report oral confrontation naming scores for their matched left- and right-handed patients (pair 2). The left-handed aphasic (a mild anomic) received 22 out of a possible score of 40 on a naming test with her right-handed counterpart (a Broca's aphasic) with a similar lesion site, scoring 28 out of 40. Although these scores are qualitatively comparable, does that similarity extend to the nature of the anomia? Is the anomia the result of a semantic processing disorder in both cases or rather related to deficits activating word form in the phonological output lexicon? Considerable support would be generated for the notion of underlying language universals across both typical and atypical aphasias if similarities in language processing breakdown can be documented. Progress has already been made in this regard in the investigation of aphasia in languages other than English (e.g., the identification in Japanese Broca's aphasics of their preference to interpret sentences by the argument structure of a predicate and by the canonical

direction of the theta-assignment [Higawara, 1993]).

In summary, the volume editors have brought together an intriguing collection of work relating to aphasia in atypical populations, written by experts who possess, without exception, impressive credentials in their respective fields. Each chapter presents a detailed and comprehensive review of the area, incorporating where appropriate reference to the representational and processing characteristics of the language under discussion. Apart from the obvious science that forms an excellent foundation for each chapter, there are frequent references to individual case data that make the volume, not only an excellent theoretical reference book, but one that is also interesting and entertaining. □

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Personality and the Search for Success

Constructive Thinking: The Key to Emotional Intelligence

by Seymour Epstein

Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998. 284 pp. ISBN 0-275-95884-1 (hardcover); 0-275-95885-X (paperback). \$69.50 hardcover; \$24.95 paperback

Review by John Mayer

Which parts of personality are related to life success? A strong ego? Sociability? Self-esteem? As the discipline of personality psychology emerged, authors, journalists, and scholars of personality themselves, wrote books on their notions of personality and success. Sigmund Freud, the first modern personality theorist, was skeptical that people could improve their mental health outside of psychotherapy. His colleagues, however, were quite willing to

provide general advice, and such volumes as Alfred Adler's (Adler, 1931/1958) *What Life Should Mean to You*, with its confident prognostications of what was wrong with life and how to make it better, set the tone of the advice book that was to cross over from the professional's study to the public's bookshelf.

Recent decades have seen highly successful popular books and reports on "self-esteem," "thinking with the right hemisphere," "flow," "intelligence" and

"emotional intelligence," among others, often with accompanying jacket-copy claims that verge on, or cross into, the sensationalistic. For example, emotional intelligence is said to be "as powerful, and at times more powerful, than IQ" (Goleman, 1995, p. 34), and to confer "an advantage in any domain in life" (Goleman, 1995, p. 36). This line of popular writing characterized by an emphasis on a single selected part of personality. Reading a book on "emotional intelligence," followed by one on "self-esteem," and then "flow," provides a flavor-of-the-month perspective that yields little insight about how the parts of personality fit together. A higher level of integration amidst personality parts is more possible than such an approach would suggest (e.g., Buss & Finn, 1987; Mayer, 1998; McAdams, 1996; McCrae, 1998).

Constructive Thinking: The Key to Emotional Intelligence is far more sophisticated than the typical work in this line. On the one hand, the book, in comparison to the author's numerous academic publications, is plainly intended for a broader audience. On the other hand, constructive thinking is not viewed as some uniquely important constituent of the psyche. Rather than being treated in isolation, constructive thinking is compared and contrasted with many other parts of personality including self-esteem, intelligence, and emotional intelligence.

The book's first section concerns a description of constructive thinking. To convey its nature in this review, I will describe constructive thinking and will critique some of the theory behind it, paying particular attention to Epstein's notion of an experiential mind. The book's remaining three sections describe how constructive thinking contributes to success, how it originates, and how it might be improved in a person.¹ In this review, I will briefly characterize those sections' discussion of the different parts of personality and their contribution to success, as well as briefly evaluate the exercises for improving constructive thinking. I will conclude by ask-

¹ Although the Preface notes that this book is a revision of an earlier one, that is, Epstein and Brodsky (1993), the changes appear substantial enough to warrant its review as a new publication, which is how I shall treat it.

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ing whether constructive thinking can enhance a person's success.

The Nature of Constructive Thinking

Constructive thinkers are identified both by the things they do and the things they refrain from doing. Among the things they do is to cope with life challenges and setbacks by means of emotional coping and behavioral coping. Emotional coping focuses particularly on changing one's perspective. It diverts awareness from stressful problems to peaceful imaginings; it involves looking on the bright side of life. Epstein writes, "Whereas a poor emotional copier might conclude, 'I failed to put across this deal, so I guess I'll never amount to anything,' a good emotional copier would realize it is only a single incident and that one can learn from experience" (p. 43). Behavioral coping, in contrast, involves an action-oriented approach—replacing worrying about a deadline with actually meeting it.

Many works on coping and related topics sidestep the issue of the purpose or aim of coping. For instance, emotional coping can be a problem if one uniformly looks on the bright side after, say, a tragic loss and fails to learn any lesson from the experience; surely feeling good is not always optimal. Epstein views coping as taking place when it can assist the mind, "(1) to obtain pleasure and avoid pain; (2) to make sense of our experience; (3) to have satisfying relationships with others; and (4) to think well of yourself" (pp. 83–84).

Finally, Epstein's idea of constructive thinking includes a consideration of naive optimism. The naive optimist believes that things will always turn out well, and consequently the person fails to prepare for the future. So, for example, a naively optimistic student may fail to prepare for a test because he or she expects to do well without trying. Consequently, the student may fail the test. Although the student's naive optimism causes problems, the problems are mitigated in part by the fact that the others are attracted to those with positive attitudes and are inclined to forgive them. Thus, naive optimism is neutral in relation to overall constructive thinking.

Constructive thinking is measured by an inventory, a brief version of which is presented in Chapter 4 of the book. The test permits people to involve themselves more directly with what Epstein is writing. The scoring key and norms supplied in the book let the test taker determine

where she or he stands on each dimension.

Epstein's Theory of Constructive Thinking

Although constructive thinking is desirable, a person cannot simply decide to become a constructive thinker. For Epstein, a decision to be more constructive takes place in the rational mind, which is far from the mental locus of constructive thinking. The rational mind uses conventionally agreed-on signs, symbols, and rules of logic and evidence. It has evolved in humans only very recently. Constructive thinking, in contrast, takes place in what Epstein refers to as the "experiential mind," a personality sphere-of-functioning which has evolved over eons to help animals adapt to environment:

Unlike lower animals (such as insects), whose behavior is "hard-wired" in the form of instincts, higher animals adapt to their environment by learning from experience. The experiential mind directs the behavior of the tiger that hunts for food and the dog that tends the sheep. This mind has continued to evolve in human beings who, with their greater brain capacity, can use it in more complex and powerful ways. (p. 82)

This experiential mind learns directly from experience, thinks quickly and in broad categories, uses concrete images and metaphors, is emotional and holistic, uses "vibes" from the past, and is somewhat outside of rational control (p. 71).

Although I view Epstein's rational-experiential dichotomy as potentially useful, it was also troubling to me. True, cognitive research provides support for the existence of a huge store of knowledge—much of it interwoven with motives and strong feelings—that is acquired through hard-won experience rather than through rational instruction. Such memories, and the associations among them, are often processed with a grab bag of mental shortcuts rather than truly rational thought. The idea of vibes from the past are not too different from "resonance" models of memory used by contemporary cognitive psychologists. I am not sure, however, whether this adds up to a justifi-

Although constructive thinking is desirable, a person cannot simply decide to become a constructive thinker.

cation to split the mind into experiential and rational parts.

To me, experiential memory seems more integrated with rationality. After all, the rational mind learns from experience, too, and it can think quickly and (sometimes) in broad categories and can make use of concrete images and metaphors. Moreover, I wondered whether the experiential and rational minds are exhaustive of all mental activity. If so, where do such entities as perception, motives, or the conscious self fit in? I wondered, in short, whether the experiential mind could be refined a bit further, perhaps limiting its definition to an experiential memory, or otherwise clarified.

The identification of an experiential mind (or memory) serves an important purpose in the book's argument for constructive thinking. People in psychological difficulty know that they are thinking and behaving problematically, and often find it difficult to change on their own terms. Epstein notes "you can no more order your experiential mind around than you can lecture your dog or cat on how to behave" (p. 195), and that certainly does capture how stubbornly our bad habits persevere in the face of our own knowing better. Consider the case of the naive optimist, "Stan" who

drifted through school assuming things would always work out well. As a result, he failed to plan ahead. He usually got away with this because his upbeat manner endeared him to his classmates, who would often "cover" for him—for instance, by letting him study with them just before an exam. The consequences were more serious, however, when Stan assumed that the business career he envisioned would simply fall into place after college. . . . Graduation brought a rude awakening when he failed to land a good job.

Would telling him to be responsible make any difference? Of course not. . . . Stan needed to be reached at the level of his experiential, not his rational mind. (p. 30)

Part of Epstein's wisdom is that he never promises that people like Stan will find it easy to change—but neither does he rule out the possibility of their changing. "You can use your rational mind to train your experiential mind," (p. 222) Epstein notes. One might say that Epstein views the rational mind as, metaphorically speaking, an animal trainer, taming the tiger that is our stubborn, ingrained, maladaptive behavior. This may be a decent approximation of what goes on for some of us. It recognizes the realistic problems involved in change, while holding out some realistic hope for change. Personality psycholo-

gists need a device by which to understand why people maintain destructive patterns when constructive ones sometimes seem so near at hand. Freud used a similar dichotomy, and Epstein acknowledges it:

Freud was right when he said that much human behavior is unconsciously driven; he just emphasized the wrong unconscious. The deep, dark unconscious that Freud depicted, seething with primitive passions that are inaccessible to the conscious mind, is not nearly as important as Freud made it out to be. . . . The experiential mind, which automatically interprets reality and influences our feelings, behavior, and conscious thoughts, does operate unconsciously, but it is not so mysterious or inaccessible as the unconscious that Freud depicted. (p. 81)

The experiential mind operates by its own two intelligences (p. 24). One is practical intelligence, which is the ability to understand the unstated or implicit rules in social organization for getting ahead (Sternberg, Wagner, Williams, & Horvath, 1995; Wagner & Sternberg, 1985). The other is emotional intelligence, which is the ability to reason abstractly with emotion, and which includes such mental abilities as perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotion (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, in press; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Whether or not these two intelligences are more closely related to the experiential mind than others, such as social intelligence, or even spatial intelligence, remains to be seen. Both practical and emotional intelligences are of interest in their own right, but their connection to the experiential mind is only tangentially explored in this book.

Constructive Thinking and Success, Development, and Self-Improvement

Once constructive thinking and the theory behind it is laid out, Epstein continues by discussing its implication for success, how it develops, and how people can improve their constructive thinking. One of the great strengths of *Constructive Thinking* is its review of what qualities of personality lead to successful living. Throughout the book, but especially in the second section, *Constructive Thinking and Success in Living*, Epstein leads us, authoritatively, through reviews of what personality attributes contribute to successful workplace performance, love, adjustment, health, and good parenting. Epstein roams freely through the psychological literature to find a combination of the most important and interesting findings regarding

success in each area. His review is also greatly enriched by a generous selection of anecdotes and case studies. The deepest and most moving of these is how Epstein's wife overcame a nearly fatal cancer, and how her own personality change may have brought this about. (His wife has written her own book on her illness). Throughout these sections, Epstein is balanced, thoughtful, and, often, wise.

The third section of the book, on the development of constructive thinking, is the book's briefest, and its most interesting chapter is on how to succeed as a parent. The section also includes some work on the stability of constructive thinking throughout the life span, and whether there are periodic changes in constructive thinking. Longitudinal studies by Epstein and his colleagues indicate that constructive thinking tends to drop in adolescence, and then continue an upward trend through much of adulthood.

The fourth and final section of the book includes chapters designed to help a person improve her or his constructive thinking. Three chapters (with exercises) concern getting to know your experiential self, evaluating it, and training it. The fourth and final chapter serves as a summary of the experiential mind and its wisdom. I suspect only the most earnest reader may have enough energy to work through the exercises in this section. Nonetheless, educators and other professionals may find them of possible value for the classroom. These exercises were developed and refined by Epstein in his own courses on stress management and are informed by his clinical work. I suspect that in a classroom such exercises would be of considerable interest and be of potential value to those who perform them. The rest of us may find that skimming these chapters is sufficient.

Recommendation

How does the book, *Constructive Thinking*, ultimately compare with other advice books? Will constructive thinking really lead to personality growth and change and contribute to our personal success? If Epstein is right, nonfiction books such as this one can help individuals change only their thinking, not what they feel, because they primarily address the rational mind as opposed to the experiential mind. To grow as a person, a reader must truly carry out constructive thinking exercises to change the experiential mind. I suspect that using a program

of change in a self-help book is difficult to pursue over the long term. As the book argues eloquently, personality change and improvement is an incremental business that takes place with time, experience, and the gentle coaxing of a rational mind.

Perhaps the best one can hope for, from such works, is to gain a sophisticated, scientific viewpoint of how personality operates. On that level, I believe the book is very successful. In fact, Epstein's book is far better than most popular alternatives. It is a thoughtful, accurate depiction of how personality can lead to success, and the ways one can improve oneself. His approach is rigorous and scholarly, yet accessible, and provides important information to the public.

Finally, Epstein's academic writing has been authoritative and influential in the field. One further enjoyable aspect of reading this volume is the encounter with a respected professor who writes about what has truly fascinated him about personality psychology over the decades of his professional life. □

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vantages over other information sources. The first is that the text can integrate findings from a diverse array of disciplines and present a coherent account of development. The second is that texts can promote critical thinking about theory and research, thereby encouraging a greater appreciation for the complexity of human development than is likely to be gleaned from the sound bite science available elsewhere. Berger and Thompson have achieved significant—though not complete—success on both counts.

The Developing Person Through the Life Span is organized chronologically. Berger and Thompson break the life span into seven periods (infancy and toddlerhood, the play years, school years, adolescence, early, middle, and late adulthood). Within each period, there are chapters devoted to biosocial, psychosocial, and cognitive (but not cognitive-social?) development. An advantage of the chronological approach is that it promotes a better understanding of the ways in which development in different domains (i.e., motor development and cognitive development) interact at various points across the life span. The chronological approach is also compatible with the emphasis on contextual influences on development present in this text in that contexts reliably change with age and development. There are, however, costs to the chronological approach, most notably that it is often difficult to see how development at an early point in development is related to that observed at a later point. Berger and Thompson make a concerted effort to deal with this limitation, however, through frequent and explicit reminders about earlier discussions of the topic currently at hand.

Relative to most other life span texts, *The Developing Person Through the Life Span* offers a fairly coherent view of human development. Berger and Thompson achieve this goal by focusing on select issues in depth rather than superficial coverage of an immense variety of topics (though it should be noted that the coverage here is still quite broad). To the extent that it is possible, the authors also tend to focus on the same types of issues at different points in development (e.g., health

Stages Through the Ages

The Developing Person Through the Life Span (4th ed.)

by Kathleen Stassen Berger with Ross A. Thompson

New York: Worth, 1998. 695 pp. ISBN 1-57259-106-4. \$65.95

Review by Shari Ellis

Both the market for developmental texts and the field of life span developmental psychology have changed dramatically since Kathleen Stassen Berger first wrote *The Developing Person* in 1980. Increasingly, authors and publishers compete to offer the most—with “the most” variously defined as coverage of the greatest number of topics (especially applied issues), the greatest proportion of up-to-date citations, or the greatest amount of text dedicated to different types of learning aids. Berger’s texts have always stood out from the crowd, but this is truer now than ever as market forces have yielded a crop of texts that are largely indistinguishable in terms of appearance, coverage, or vision. Over the years and, presumably, despite mounting pressure, Berger has remained remarkably true to her mission to write texts that “reflect the complexity of human development—without being condescending or, alternatively, so overburdened with theoretical and academic details as to be dull and difficult” (p. xxi). The result of her collaboration here with Ross Thompson is a beautifully written text that accurately captures the essence of human development across the life span.

Textbook writers and instructors of life span human development face a formidable task choosing what topics to cover, given the abundance of relevant information. The challenge has been exacerbated in recent years due to increases in the

amount and variety of research being conducted on issues related to human development, public awareness of and interest in those issues, and accessibility to research reports in the print media, on television, and on the Internet. Who among us has not confidently presented an updated lecture on, say, day-care, health-related behaviors, or Alzheimer’s disease only to

ask about some cutting-edge research hears on the news or viewed on the Internet the night before? Because most of the material presented in human development textbooks is now available elsewhere (and is often explained in ways that are both more interesting and understandable than the average textbook presentation), one has to wonder what the primary function of the college text should be.

Good life span textbooks offer two ad-

Berger’s texts have always stood out from the crowd, but this is truer now than ever as market forces have yielded a crop of texts that are largely indistinguishable in terms of appearance, coverage, or vision.

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