

Book review

Kelly, D.C., Howe-Barksdale S., Gitelson, D. (Eds.). *Treating young veterans: Promoting resilience through practice and advocacy*. New York, NY: Springer.

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When I was first approached about reviewing this text, I did a quick review, and realized that frankly I was not qualified as a professional in the mental health field and therefore felt ill equipped to evaluate its value. However, when I approached the Editor he quickly informed me that he capable of finding mental health professionals to provide clinical reviews. He explained that he was more interested in a viewpoint based on my personal background as a veteran. With this caveat in mind, I moved forward and have given every effort to provide an unbiased review of a subject that I have a profound interest.

I am proud to say that I am a veteran and have the greatest respect for those who answer the call to serve the United States of America. I served as an officer in the Marine Corps from 1971 to 1974; however, perhaps even more importantly, I was the dependent son of a career Marine or a “veteran by proxy” as labeled in the book. My father served for 30 years, including war zone duty during World War II, Korea and Vietnam. As such, I have lived my entire life around the military. I know firsthand the pressures placed on families and communities when military members are deployed and return home from the combat zone. From 1967 to 1969 our family had two members, my father and older brother, serve with the Marines in Vietnam. Although, I was a product of the Vietnam Era, I would opine that my experiences are somewhat comparable to those endured by the veterans and families of our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. My family and I were forced out of on base housing when our father was transferred on permanent orders to the Republic of Vietnam in 1967. I also experienced being pulled out of a freshman undergraduate class in 1967 and being told to call home

immediately because there was a death in my family. I later felt guilty because I was so relieved my grandmother had died and not my father. My brothers and I were extremely fortunate we had a strong mother to help us deal with the pressures presented by war. As all military families, we then adapted as our family members returned home and resumed life outside the combat zone. I know this war was tough on my father. You could see it in his eyes. The veterans and their loved ones were forced in many ways to just “suck it up” and move on. Any revelation of mental health problems had the potential for the death of a career. Even the dependents knew that reality. Unfortunately, the system failed many of them and history has documented those personal tragedies. That is why the work and research presented in this book is critical to anyone who loves their country and deeply cares about the men and women who serve it and its people.

Veterans are entitled to not only our gratitude and respect, but our guarantee that we as a nation will do everything in our power to ensure self-determination through mental health support. Any book that addresses this need is truly welcome. The editors clearly state their purpose is to not only enhance the practice and continued research services for veterans but also to serve as a source of information as to what support is available to those of the veteran community. As a veteran, I was quite heartened by the lofty goals and diversity of ideas that emerged in the creative process in bringing this project to fruition. This is no easy challenge. I am confident the editor’s kept asking themselves, “What have we left out?” In my humble opinion, not much is missing. I was hoping for not only a text that would provide contemporary guidance

to today's practitioner based on solid empirical evidence but also a wealth of ideas that would stimulate future research and touch everyone in our country who cares about this issue. More importantly, I was hoping the text would be something that the veteran's and their families could use as a reference not only for information and guidance but encouragement that comes with the knowledge that somebody cares about your mental well-being. I am pleased to state that this book has something for everybody whether it be a veteran, veteran by proxy, mental health professional, veteran's advocate, policy maker, or even a member of the criminal justice community. I hope they take advantage of the resource and it stimulates further research and discussion. It is a must read. I was particularly impressed with the diversity of veteran subjects addressed in the book, which includes Active Duty Regulars, National Guard, Reservists and the families from which these brave men and women hail from. This is essential because each veteran is unique in themselves and the editors and contributors recognized this fact and made sure they each received coverage.

The editors and contributors have also shown great courage by taking on the critical contemporary veteran mental health issues such as suicide and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to name just two. They support their findings with credible research results and sound reasoning and identify those areas where more research is needed. I found the identification of best practices to be with the Maryland Project and Buffalo Veteran's Treatment Center as just two examples of the work currently being done that is particularly noteworthy. These practices give others a solid foundation for which to build their own programs. The reader will learn that very important research has been undertaken by the mental health field on behalf of our veteran community and the results are being shared and utilized to improve treatment. Again, I am particularly impressed with the need to individualize treatment as there is no one

size fits all with the diversity of our military force and to do otherwise is insane.

In summary, as a veteran I am quite heartened by the work that is being done in the mental health field for our veterans as presented in this book. Yes, there is more to be done but that is expected with such a challenging field. This book is a must read for veterans and their families, mental health professionals, policy makers, criminal justice professionals, academics, employers, and any citizen interested in the health of our combat veterans. This book is not only for "Young" veterans but for "All" veterans. The editors and contributors have my greatest respect for the service they have done with this publication and their continued efforts in support of our nation's veterans.