



A Perilous Calling: The Hazards of Psychotherapy Practice

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What are the consequences of prolonged exposure to the mental and emotional sufferings of others? In what ways can the practice of psychotherapy impede a person's ability to form healthy, fulfilling personal relationships? Is it true that psychotherapists are unusually prone to mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual acting out, workaholism, and suicide? Is there something about people who are drawn to a life in psychotherapy that puts them at higher risk of developing certain behavioral disorders?

Now in a candid and revealing look into the private and professional lives of psychotherapists, a group of noted practitioners attempt to answer these and other hard questions about the women and men who pursue this most perilous of callings.

Throughout the pages of this fascinating book, nearly thirty psychotherapists--including psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and social workers--provide intimate, at times painfully frank, accounts of their inner experiences and struggles. In a series of compelling first-person narratives, written in a variety of styles, they explore such topics as the therapist's personal development and unconscious motivations for becoming a therapist, the emotional impact of clinical work on the psychotherapist, the stresses and strains that the practice of psychotherapy can exert on a marriage, parenting and psychotherapy, disillusionment and the physical and psychic isolation of clinical work, the struggles of therapists who suffer from characterological problems of their own, and the extreme perils of dealing with suicidal patients. They also delve into a number of important professional, ethical, and legal hazards practitioners face in this age of the medical "quick-fix."

A Perilous Calling offers readers unparalleled insight into the psychotherapist's deepest concerns and conflicts. It reveals the perils of practice and candidly explores how some psychotherapists have learned to cope with them. In reading this book, professionals will learn how to take better care of themselves both in their professional and personal lives and will find new ways to transform those perils into opportunities for growth and mastery. At the same time, their patients, friends, and loved ones will gain a deeper understanding of these complex and

uniquely caring individuals.

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Editorial Review

From the Publisher

Experienced psychotherapists provide an inside view of the emotional, intrapsychic, interpersonal, practical and ethical difficulties faced by clinicians. Covers such important topics as the therapist's personal development, the emotional impact of clinical work, how therapists cope with their own illnesses or problems, legal hazards and sustenance of the professional self. Uses vivid vignettes of personal experiences to illustrate the broad range of obstacles and perils therapists encounter.

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

[About the editor](#)

MICHAEL B. SUSSMAN, PsyD, is Clinical Supervisor at Codman Square Health Center, Dorchester, Massachusetts, and a clinical instructor in psychology at Harvard University. Dr. Sussman spent three years (1990 to 1993) as a staff psychologist at Stoney Brook Counseling Center in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Menninger Foundation, from 1988 to 1989. He holds a doctorate in clinical

psychology from Hahnemann University, and a bachelor's degree in music composition and performance from Hampshire College. In 1987, he received the Randall B. Weiss Award for compassion and caring in clinical work. Dr. Sussman is also the author of *A Curious Calling: Unconscious Motivations for Practicing Psychotherapy*.

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