

## Book Reviews

As with the last edition we have a smaller number of reviews than usual, mainly due to requested books not arriving in time to send out for review! However, the next edition promises to be fuller, thanks to a pack of books that arrived from Sage last week. This issue continues our established trend of having an extremely diverse range of reviews, with texts on promoting safe learning environments, lifespan development and helping children deal with stress, change and anxiety – many thanks to Ann, Damian and Jitesh for their excellent reviews. As usual I will email ENSEC members requesting volunteers to perform the reviews for the next issue (don't forget, you get to keep the book by way of thanks for your help) in the near future. In the meantime, please enjoy the three reviews below.

**Neil Humphrey, book reviews editor**

**1. *Comprehensive Planning for Safe Learning Environments: A School Professional's Guide to Integrating Physical and Psychological Safety – Prevention Through Recovery***

**Author:** Reeves, M.A., Kanan, L.M. and Plog, A.E.

**Publisher:** Routledge

**Year of Publication:** 2009

**ISBN:** 978-0-415-99835-2

---

*Comprehensive planning for safe learning environments* is one of the latest additions to the *School-Based Practice in Action Series*, which was developed to offer practical support for the implementation of evidence-based programmes in school settings. Written for school administrators, school-based mental health professionals and other educational professionals, this book aims to provide both a framework and the tools necessary for establishing a safe learning environment.

School safety is defined as “*physical security and freedom from fear or anxiety about being harmed by others*” (p151). This definition reflects the authors’ emphasis on the inter-relatedness of physical and psychological safety and, unlike similar books in this genre, the book is structured around both of these factors, focusing first on physical and then on psychological safety.

The authors propose a four-step framework (M-PHAT) for establishing a safe school, based on taking a multi-phase, multi-hazard, multi-agency and multi-tiered approach. These four phases - prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery – reflect the authors’ realistic approach as they acknowledge that although the main aim is to prevent a crisis from occurring, this is not always possible and consequently include a chapter on responding to and managing a crisis in the final section of the book.

The second half of the book focuses on psychological safety which, according to the authors, may be achieved through the promotion of a positive school climate and an emphasis on students’ emotional well-being and positive social development. This is where the multi-tiered approach becomes important as the authors recommend that this be achieved through the use of universal, targeted and finally more intensive interventions for pupils in need. The book emphasises the importance of selecting evidence-based interventions that have been demonstrated to be effective in ‘real-world’ settings and the authors point out that not all prevention interventions are equally effective, and may even produce negative outcomes. They highlight features of interventions that have been found to have little or no impact and, although aimed at practitioners, refer to empirical studies to support their claims. Potential barriers and challenges to implementation are also acknowledged, although perhaps more detail on how these may be addressed would have been helpful. Despite this, there is a useful section where the authors justify the use of targeted interventions to address students’ mental health needs, which school leaders may find informative and helpful when briefing the less enthusiastic staff referred to by the authors.

This book is well-structured and easy to use. Chapters are self-contained and clearly headed subsections are brief, facilitating the easy retrieval of relevant and interesting information. The many useful features include numerous tables and figures which clearly set out and summarise the tasks and processes required for establishing a safe learning environment. Practitioners may find the lists of universal and targeted programmes particularly useful. These include summaries of the focus areas and age-groups targeted and details of the levels of recommendation from organisations such as SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), CASEL and the Blueprints Center for Violence Prevention; these support practitioners’ own assessments of whether programmes may be useful in their specific contexts and may be co-ordinated with existing effective approaches within school. Another useful feature is the ‘real world’ examples that demonstrate how schools have implemented safety plans; these are supported by templates (on the accompanying CD) which facilitate the replication of successful approaches.

A strength of the book is its comprehensiveness, but this may also be off-putting to some readers, who may find the multitude of tasks identified in its lists overwhelming; for example, the list of domains to be included in a physical safety audit covers almost 12 pages. The authors do point out, however, that

establishing and maintaining a safe learning environment is “*a marathon, not a sprint*” (p285), and emphasise using short-term as well as long-term goals and building upon existing effective practice wherever possible.

A limitation of this book is its evident focus on the US context. The safety issues referred to are supported by US statistics and threats to safety, such as school shootings, in the US context. The authors do, however, include websites and details of programme evaluations where appropriate, which may improve its accessibility to some extent.

In summary, although very much written for a US market, this book is very comprehensive and likely to be of practical use to any schools wishing to improve both the physical and psychological safety of its students.

## *Ann Lendrum*

*Lecturer in Psychology of Education*

*School of Education*

*University of Manchester, UK*

## **2. Lifespan development: Infancy through adulthood.**

**Authors:** Laurence Steinberg, Marc. H. Bornstein, Deborah Lowe Vandell, and Karen S. Rook.

**Publisher:** Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

**Year of Publication:** 2011

**ISBN-13:** 978-0-495-83009-2

**ISBN-10:** 0-495-83009-7

---

This highly informative book is presented in such a way that it quickly and easily captures the interest of readers. As an added plus point, it provides material that is clearly explained by means of clear and accessible language and also by the generous use of examples and illustrations throughout.

The book delves into exploring human development in a very logical way by approaching it in a chronological manner, starting from conception and prenatal development, then describing progressive developmental periods of the human life-course, and finishing up with late adulthood. This progression from one life-stage to another further contributes to the book's accessibility to readers who are unfamiliar with the material presented in the book. Added to this, any technical jargon presented is marked out in bold print and well explained, and this serves to facilitate the integration of these words with the reader's overall reading of the text.

The book is introduced by chapters that delineate the underlying rationale for engaging in the scientific study of human development and that explore how nature and nurture influence its evolution through different life-phases. By focusing on intrapersonal, interpersonal and the wider cultural and societal aspects of human interaction, these chapters blend in well with the remainder of the text. The book also presents as an epilogue, an exploration on death and dying. Sadly, this important aspect of human existence is often omitted from discussions on human development. The inclusion of this topic contributes to the informative nature of this book.

Readers who would like to use this book as course-material in further education or higher education courses will find the use of colourful illustrations, interim summaries, running glossaries in the page margins, very helpful in integrating what they have learnt. Furthermore, readers will also find sections that have been called 'summing up and looking ahead', 'did you get it?' and 'important terms and concepts'. These sections serve to engage them in reflecting further on the data presented and in monitoring the extent of their recollecting and understanding the material in the text. The book also has a number of supplements that can be acquired through the publishers including an instructor's resource manual, a test bank containing related multiple choice and essay questions, a one-stop lecture and class preparation tool that contains ready to use PowerPoint slides that can be modified accordingly, and a study guide. There are also on-line resources which can be used alongside the book.

It has been said that 'one cannot judge a book by its cover' but then to every rule there are exceptions and this book is a case in point. The symbolic reality presented by having two pairs of boots alongside one another, one a smaller size than the other, offers a precursor to the notion that people face different challenges and have different needs as they grow older, and it is only by understanding them that they can be adequately and competently addressed. The book as a whole offers considerable data on this, but if some readers of this book are more focused on a particular aspect of human development, they will not be disappointed, for the book is structured in such a way as to make this focused reading permissible, different parts (or sections) being dedicated to different phases of the life-span.

Topics such as how drug-abuse and teenage pregnancy influence young people, different types of family structures, transitions of young people to adulthood, the combination of work and family in dual-earner families, relationships of middle-aged people with their adult children, and relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are likely to particularly attract the interest of young readers since these topics are likely to have a bearing, in one way or another, on their lives. This places this book in a favourable position as a college or university text-book. It is also favourably written out for teachers and lecturers who would find it a valuable teaching resource that could easily trigger discussion and reflection about human development in a classroom or lecture-room setting. Lecturers and teachers would find themselves helped along by the book's particularly clear structure and by its being both engaging and easily readable. Throughout the book, the authors have succeeded in breaking down complex ideas and then building them up in such a way as to make them readily comprehensible – something which is no mean feat by anyone's standards.

Having said this, although the book has great breadth, it lacks depth in certain areas implying that an academic audience that is highly conversant upon different aspects of human development and that is aiming to expand its knowledge of related theoretical aspects might find itself seeing this book as a precursor to other texts, rather than one that would offer it the technical knowledge that it might be seeking. On the other hand, granted that each of the chapters presents key topics in an accessible manner, I am certain that the book could easily serve as a useful source of reference for a wide readership - most especially since, as I have said above, it draws together key ideas and theories in relation to human development at particular phases of the life-span in a clear and systematic manner.

*Damian Spiteri*

*Teaching Fellow*

*University of Strathclyde, Glasgow*

### ***3. Helping Children to Cope with Change, Stress and Anxiety***

**Author:** Deborah M. Plummer

**Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publisher

**Year of Publication:** 2010

**ISBN:** 1843109603

---

The book is a great tool for a range of people to working with children coping with change, stress and anxiety. The author uses her wide range of experience in various fields to create a tool that addresses a matter, which many practitioners struggle to address in the classroom. The use of developing knowledge around the brain and how it works, enlightens the reader to the complexities involved and how they can be appropriated addressed in a setting which best fits the needs of vulnerable children. The book breaks down the issue into readable and manageable components, with practical activities that explores vital underlying themes such as self esteem, self awareness and emotional well being.

The strategies are clearly explained, with a good use of theory to back up the thinking. It remains as a child centric approach, looking at all aspects of well being, to the physical (with breathing exercises) to the mental. There is an exhaustive list of practical steps a practitioner can do to create the 'right' environment for the child to explore this theme, whilst still being aware that they are cared for, and encouraged appropriately. Boundary setting, which can often be a challenging, has been addressed well with the author drawing on her extensive knowledge of speech and language therapy to ensure that the right message is conveyed to the

young person. It explores self limiting factors well, which enables young people to tap into their own internal resources and develop their own strategies of moving 'out' from that space.

*Jitesh Odedra*

*The Pupil Parent Partnership, UK*