

seems to blur the borders between developmental dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities, a line more carefully differentiated in other reference texts for the layperson. Sally Shaywitz, a leading dyslexia researcher, notes in *Overcoming Dyslexia* (1) that developmental dyslexia is “distinguished [from other language disorders] by the unique, encapsulated nature of the phonologic weakness, one not intruding into other language or thinking domains” (p. 140). Shaywitz’s description of the signs and symptoms of developmental dyslexia conflicts noticeably with that offered in *The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child*, most obviously in its distinction between the isolated decoding weaknesses present in developmental dyslexia and the more widespread comprehension weaknesses found in other language-based learning disabilities. More startling than blurred diagnostic categories is Frank’s inclusion of symptomatic descriptors—such as difficulties with spatial orientation—described in Shaywitz’s section on myths about dyslexia. Frank’s intention may very well be to simplify the often complex diagnostic categories, but such imprecision seems a disservice to the audience he seeks to educate.

The book’s imprecision is unfortunate but less likely to prove problematic to parents than to nosologists. In contrast, the strikingly incomplete and naive discussion of the process by which parents initiate and secure special services or an individualized education program for their children is of direct concern. Federal law, codified in section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (amended in 1997), requires schools to identify, evaluate, and provide for the needs of disabled children. However, the realities of fiscal and staffing constraints on public school districts around the country can make securing such legal rights an uphill battle for parents, if not outright unattainable. Consequently, in a text purporting to educate families and help them navigate the unfamiliar territory of dyslexia, vagueness in this section constitutes a serious flaw. Frank fails not only to differentiate between the services required by each law but even to mention the relevant legislation at all. As a result, critical details are never addressed—such as the timeline allowed by law between the parents’ request for an evaluation and the institution of an individualized education program or the venues of recourse should the individualized education program prove unacceptable. Frank notes that parents may opt to bring an advocate to the unfamiliar process of a school planning and placement program meeting but does not suggest the possibility of an education attorney or of nonadversarial means of due process. In fact, his description leaves the impression that schools are proactive and helpful systems—an idealistic yet unfortunately inaccurate view.

The strengths of *The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child* lie in its attention to the daily emotional and practical hurdles of dyslexia. Frank’s compassionate and accessible description of the challenges faced by children with a reading disability is both informative and reassuring. The book most likely should find its niche in the hands of parents hoping to understand the lifelong journey on which they are jointly embarking with their children.

Reference

1. Shaywitz S: *Overcoming Dyslexia*. New York, Alfred A Knopf, 2003

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Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity, edited by Tracie O’Keefe and Katrina Fox. New York, Jossey-Bass (John Wiley & Sons), 2003, 256 pp., \$17.95 (paper).

As a seasoned adult psychiatrist, I thought that I had an acceptable working knowledge of gender identity disorder. Then I read this book. As the title suggests, it is a volume of stories, first-person accounts of individuals who have faced huge challenges to their identity. In reading their stories, I was engaged by the complexity of their lives, the confusion and loneliness, the effects on their families, and the dignity and courage that underlie their distinctive journeys.

The foreword is written by Stephen Whittle, J.D., a senior lecturer in law in England, prolific author, social activist, and transsexual man. He sets the stage with this statement:

Trans people beg the whole question of human understanding as it currently is about gender and sex. Taking that challenge, over the past fifty years, the transsexual/transgender community through writing and theorizing has attempted to offer an “insider’s” exploration of the ways in which trans people view gender issues. As this work progresses, trans people have been among the first to acknowledge that gender, as we know it, is not a clear-cut issue.

The coeditors are Dr. Tracie O’Keefe, a clinical hypnotherapist, psychotherapist, and counselor who came out as a transsexual woman in 1997, and Katrina Fox, her partner, who is a freelance journalist, book author, and former dancer and actress. In the introduction they describe their intent to let the authors’ stories stand alone without analysis or commentary. They write,

We think it’s about time for those who have often been pathologized by the medical profession, demonized by mainstream society, and ignored by lawmakers for years to speak their truths for themselves.

What follows, after a glossary (thank goodness—I needed definitions of the terms “metagender,” “she-male,” “sie,” “s/he,” “zie,” and “transgender” versus “transsexual”), are 26 stories by people from all over the world but mainly the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. Although some describe “being trapped in the wrong body,” not all do as they make the transition from male to female or female to male. There is no magic endpoint for many but only a new beginning—a process that may take them into a relationship with someone of the opposite sex or same sex, someone born into that sex or someone who also has made a transition. Some male-to-female transsexuals may stop along the way and live indefinitely and quite comfortably with breasts and male genitalia. Many of the writings celebrate gender diversity and

having had the experience of living one facet of life as a woman or man and another phase as the other.

As a couples' therapist, I was most interested in their relationships. I think I'm correct in concluding that their relationships are really about love and finding someone, finally, who accepts them, someone whom they can trust and love in return. And this may or may not include having a family. Non-sexual intimacy seems to have ascendancy over sexual compatibility and fulfillment.

Downside of the book? Although each of the narratives is interesting, most psychiatrists may not want—or have the time—to read so many accounts. To be expected, the writing styles vary greatly, but each author's voice is eminently audible. The editors list resources, including web sites, of organizations and groups across the globe. This is a wonderful book to recommend to patients who are questioning their gender identity; it will lessen the isolation, inform, instill hope, and enrich psychotherapy.

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TREATMENT GUIDES

The Dana Guide to Brain Health, edited by Floyd E. Bloom, M.D., M. Flint Beal, M.D., and David J. Kupfer, M.D. New York, Free Press, 2003, 733 pp., \$45.00.

Although lay readers are able to choose from among many excellent books concerning mental illness and mental health, few really good books have been available that adequately cover new information concerning the neurosciences, the brain, and brain diseases. Even the classic *The Broken Brain* (1) deals primarily with mental illness. Now, the Dana Foundation has assembled a group of world-class editors and contributors, talented writers, and superb illustrators to offer a top-notch "primer" for the lay public interested in brainy matters.

Encyclopedic in scope, and starting with "How to Think About the Brain," the 19 chapters offer synopses of normal and abnormal brain processes, including such provocative titles as "Basic Brain Care: Protecting Your Mental Capital," followed by first-rate introductions to development; healthy brain processes; emotions and social functions; and learning, thinking, and remembering. Next we find sections dealing with developmental disorders, brain disorders affecting senses and body functions (including sleep disorders, seizures, and fatigue), infectious and autoimmune disorders, movement and muscle disorders, pain, nervous system injuries, and cognitive disorders. About 70 pages are allotted to psychiatric disorders (a section titled Emotional and Control Disorders). Each topic merits about 2–6 pages of text, and basic concepts are at least briefly reviewed. The book concludes with a helpful glossary, lists of medications used in the treatment of brain diseases, suggested readings, and resource lists of organizations confronting the different disorders.

Photographs, line drawings, and easy-to-access tables and figures abound, and the color illustrations are on a par with Frank Netta's classics. Educators may want to prepare slides

from many of the outstanding line drawings and cartoons. The writing is user friendly and should be easily grasped by anyone from advanced high school levels onward. Frequent sidebars summarize important points, including practical advice (e.g., "epilepsy safety measures," "coping with blindness," "how to manage your sleep disorder"). All laypeople with curiosity and/or a "need to know" about brains in general or particular brain disorders will be well served by these fine introductory presentations, and the volume would be an especially thoughtful gift for inquisitive, biological-science-minded students—perhaps a way to snare young minds (and their brains) into careers in psychiatry, neurology, and neuroscience. It could easily serve as a text for a lower-level introductory college-level course—instead of Abnormal Psychology, what about Abnormal Brains? However, because the book's goal is to provide an introductory survey, readers wanting in-depth information on a specific topic will want to go to the suggested supplementary readings.

My concern is that too many people needing information about their own brains and those of others these days will head straight to the "net" and fail to take advantage of this high-quality resource, into which so many authorities have obviously put so much time and devoted effort. Should this volume be made available online?

Reference

1. Andreasen NC: *The Broken Brain*. New York, HarperCollins, 1984

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The Treatment of Anxiety Disorders: Clinician Guides and Patient Manuals, 2nd ed., by Gavin Andrews, Mark Creamer, Rocco Crino, Caroline Hunt, Lisa Lape, and Andrew Page. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 624 pp., \$60.00 (paper).

The Anxiety Book: Developing Strength in the Face of Fear, by Jonathan Davidson, M.D., and Henry Dreher. New York, Riverhead Books (Penguin Group), 2003, 320 pp., \$24.95; \$15.00 (paper).

Twenty years ago the anxiety disorders were orphans in the mental health field, widely seen as uncommon, trivial, and essentially untreatable. Serious researchers and clinicians focused on the affective disorders and schizophrenia. Over the past two decades, however, the anxiety disorders have gradually emerged from this neglect into their current status as a major focus of research and practice. Much of the credit for this change belongs to the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, a national association founded in 1980 that includes both researchers and clinicians with the added benefit of substantial numbers of sufferers from anxiety disorders and their family members.

One measure of this dramatic shift of focus in mental health is the emergence of many excellent books on anxiety written for both professionals and for people with the anxiety disorders, which are now recognized as the most prevalent of all of the groups of mental disorders. These two books are among the best of this bumper crop. Both reflect their authors' distinguished clinical and research experience.