

Trauma & Identity

Identity-Oriented Psychotrauma Therapy

Theory and Practise by Vivian Broughton

Review by Valeria Lamers

As an IoPT practitioner myself I was very much looking forward to Vivian Broughton's new book about the theory and practise of IoPT. The theory developed by Dr. Franz Ruppert over the last 30 years would be brought in an up- to- date version and combined with the profound knowledge and experience of a devoted IoPTpractitioner (i.e. Vivian Broughton). This promised to be an exciting contribution in our understanding of the theory and especially the view on working with people.

I did not get disappointed:

If you want to get a deep insight on what Identity-Oriented Psychotrauma Theory is, how it is developed and what it means to bring it into practise you can find many answers in reading this book:

The theory covers the first two quarters of the book and describes thoroughly all core items that are involved in IoPT, inevitably leading to the consequences of this theory for our work in practise which covers the last part of the book.

Vivian starts with bringing our human species in the broader perspective of all living existence, describing the strong natural instinct of all species to survive in all conditions as disturbing as they can be. Doing so she emphasizes the vulnerability we as human beings have, being dependent on our surrounding for so many years and forced to adapt to often sub-optimal conditions. What follows is, that we develop a primarily survival identity losing contact with who we originally are.

In the following chapters Vivian in detail explains the structure, purpose and function of our psyche. How it reacts on traumatising circumstances and what that means. She then explores the definition of Identity as it is understood in IoPT perspective which is contrary to the conventional use of this word. This understanding thus leads to the emphasis on the early pre-birth and immediate post-birth experiences and explains why this period is central in IoPT-thinking.

Vivian goes on with defining, exploring and describing the notion Trauma in the IoPT perspective, with pointing out how trauma has been avoided by psychology and actually all society due to the mechanism in all of us of avoiding our own pain.

Maybe in trying to cover the complexity of the understanding of trauma and identity and how this affects us she dedicates an extra chapter in the theory part to the function and different forms of emotions. Very valuable information as such it might have been easier to understand the narrative structure if this was done in a more condensed form or in a different place, stretching maybe the

difference of healthy and survival emotions in general and then focussing on the emotion which had not been named and identified yet: the emotion shown once we are in contact with trauma feelings, Vivian calls it: “emotional pain”. Nevertheless the information she gives here is exceptionally valuable and fed by her long years of working as a therapist and IoPT practitioner.

This second part of the book describing the radical change in practise primarily addresses (potential) IoPT practitioners and shows what kind of work is needed to heal trauma.

By first describing the method and then what it asks from an IoPT practitioner Vivian step by step guides the reader through the way of working, with examples of and reflections about what the potential practitioner might meet in a process.

An extra chapter Vivian devotes to the individual sessions, defending the quality and need of it as a validate possibility for IoPT- processes, a way of working with its own quality. This might have been a good place to also describe how IoPT can function online, which is possible in groups as well as individually, both two valuable possibilities in working- one of the credits the Corona pandemic has brought to IoPT work. Maybe something she wants to address in further writing...

A large amount of examples from practise colour and illustrate her view on the different topics which can inform and inspire (potential) practitioners. They show an urge to share the huge experience that Vivian gained over the last decades.

Vivian’s description and explanations are more than just a summary of Franz Ruppert’s theory. By bringing it into the broad perspective of all living existence and understanding the theory from the practitioner’s view it becomes clear how radical this new understanding of trauma influences our conventional view on ourselves in every layer of our living as a human being. Hence, it also explains the need for a radical change of our understanding of therapy.

Her focus on bringing the theory in practise fills a gap in what is written in IoPT literature until now. Her writing shows how being an IoPT practitioner means much more than “learning” a theory and method: it means to keep on exploring ourselves and finding our own way in relating to others from our healthy part.

Being inspiring and useful for professionals in the first place, the clearness, kindness and the loving attitude shown in her style of writing makes Vivian Broughton’s book also easily accessible for everybody who is interested in herself, aiming for living a good life.

Valeria Lamers
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