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WHAT'S ON YOUR HOLIDAY BOOKSHELF?

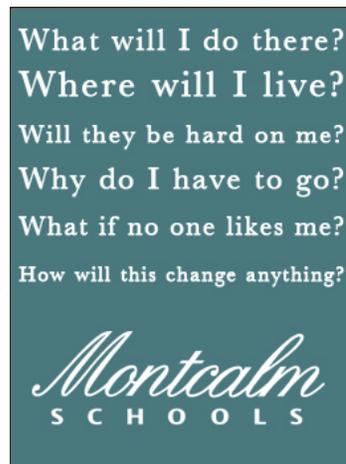
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"I guess there are never enough books" John Steinbeck

By: Janyce Lastman

What's sitting on your bookshelf? As many of us stay close to home this year, catching up on our reading is likely to be a popular pursuit this holiday season.

Some of my favourite book finds this past year are not only new releases, but books that made my "best of" list because they combine high-interest, pertinent professional information and new insights that I need to stay current, with a truly enjoyable "good read" experience that I crave when trying to unwind. Here are two of these - more to follow as the new year progresses.



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Within my practice, I've seen a spike in young adults with full-blown "borderline personality disorder" diagnosis, and teens with professional evaluations flashing early warning signs of "developing borderline traits" or "personality issues." These two books have helped me appreciate just how pervasive, complex and powerful a pull BPD wields. Yet these same books also gave me hope that BPD can be beaten - and provide a storehouse of strategies I then share with those who struggle to stay upright when crossing into BPD's wake.

GET ME OUT OF HERE:
"My Recovery From Borderline Personality Disorder"
By: Rachel Reiland (Pseudonym)
Hazeldon Publishing Co., 2004
Center City, MN
ISBN-10: 1592850995
ISBN-13: 978-1592850990

Get Me Out of Here is a compelling, raw, first-hand account of a young woman's battle against

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her own Borderline Personality Disorder even as it threatens to destroy her family, her identity and her future. She tackles her problem traditionally - via intensive, expensive and prolonged out-patient counseling from a particularly empathic, skilled and determined psychiatrist, plus a few in-patient hospitalizations when safety requires and insurance concedes. Yet, Rachel is someone to whom we relate instantly. She is bright, creative, funny and eminently likeable. She is also a talented, dedicated diarist - determined to document every aspect of her evolution toward becoming a loyal friend, loyal wife, mother, daughter and contributing member of her community despite it all. Though her battles rage with white-hot intensity, her struggles are inter-cut with everyday, tender or funny moments; small but significant accomplishments and "firsts;" and the odd dizzying breakthrough.

To read of a life controlled by BPD is often described as exhausting and depressing - in fact, the few "life with borderline" stories in print are often cast aside as they are simply too much to tolerate. But because of who Rachel is as a person, and how well her writing captures her own humanity and joie de vivre despite her condition, this book escapes a similar fate. So I kept reading - all 430-odd pages - and emerged feeling that I now understood, not just factually but intuitively, something of what life as a Borderline really means, and what it takes to attack and perhaps beat the diagnosis with determination and perseverance. And while getting re-educated, I enjoyed a good read: a story well written and even better told.

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER IN ADOLESCENTS

"A Complete Guide to Understanding and Coping When Your Adolescent has BPD"

By: Blaise A. Aguirre, MD

Fair Winds Press, 2007

Beverly, MA

ISBN- 10: 1592332870

ISBN-13: 978-1592332878

At first blush, Borderline Personality Disorder in Adolescents looks like a "stop walking on eggshells" clone. But I had to read it. Its author, Dr. Blaise Aguirre, has treated some of my most challenging younger clients suspected of being borderline and their families when no-one else would have taken them on. Dr. Aguirre's cutting edge adolescent residential unit at McLean Hospital, Boston, MA, is affiliated with the Harvard Medical School <http://www.mclean.harvard.edu/patient/child/atp.php>. They dare to diagnose BPD in those as young as 12 or 13 and treat them with intensive DBT (dialectical behavioural therapy) presented classroom-style, for 20 or more hours weekly, yielding high success rates. Conventional clinicians and medical doctors declare personality disorders not diagnosable until adulthood, meaning that many young people with "BPD traits" suffer inappropriate or ineffective treatments for years, entrenching the BPD more deeply.

Dr. Aguirre explains with humour and clear language how adolescent borderline differs functionally from its adult counterpart, how to spot it early on, tease it apart from other teen diagnoses and general angst and strategize together within the family using recommendations for classroom and home. Ultimately he settles into his belief of "best practices:" uprooting or reversing the Borderline in many cases within the right residential clinical setting providing intensive daily DBT. While the book is a how-to, it is also crammed with true stories of hope and success with real-life examples of strategies in action. Several copies disappeared from my office this year after embarrassed clients or colleagues to whom I'd lent my copy admitted that "their" copy was now covered in highlighter or crammed with notes in the margins. Fortunately, most provided me with a replacement. This is high praise for any how-to book, let alone one tackling such a controversial and difficult topic.

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