

# *MIND MATTERS Self Help Book*

## SECTION I. THE FOREST BEFORE THE TREES

### Chapter 1. Preface

Four plus decades ago, and fortunate to still be counting, I was struggling at age 19 to find my way through the career thicket. I had completed my sophomore studies at Marquette University in Milwaukee during the politically tumultuous 1969/70 academic year. Stimulated by constitutional law and civil liberties courses, I nonetheless remained directionless, especially after being told that civil liberties legal work was typically pro bono, and not the centerpiece of a legal career. Out of curiosity, perhaps born of my own late adolescent family angst, I picked up a copy of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* that summer, and found myself fascinated with the workings of the mind. During the following fall semester, I took the introductory psychology course, and within a month, I was certain of my career direction. While late adolescent self-discovery, and intrigue regarding psychomechanics were the initial hooks, I also deliberated over values, and decided that working cooperatively with people as a psychologist trumped working in an adversarial environment as an attorney. I had also found myself somewhat rudderless as I engaged in the typical late adolescent reexamination of my religious teachings, assessed the underpinnings of ethics, and progressively found more value in religious practices than beliefs. As I rebuilt my spirituality from the ground up, I increasingly found myself comfortable with the consequences based, natural law values inherent in psychology, as well as some of the practices of eastern religions. I took nothing but psychology and philosophy classes during those last three semesters at Marquette, completed my Masters degree there, and moved from winterland to bayou country for a PhD at LSU, where I met my wife, D'Lane, as well. Following our clinical internships at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in the cultural candyshop of Los Angeles, we settled in the Florida Panhandle to pursue our careers and family. As I write this, the oldest of my three daughters has turned 30, and I joyfully juggle my creative interests in photography and stained glass with my writing, excursions with family and friends, and my professional practice of psychology with D'Lane. Our past decade of professional work has been centered at our Turning Point Center for Psychological and Family Growth, here in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

Over the years, I have found that one of my clinical strengths is my ability to explain the workings of the mind. When I am attempting to persuade a client to approach uncomfortable feelings for the sake of future growth and improvement, I certainly prefer to explain the benefits and liabilities, both short and long term, rather than asking someone to simply trust my authority or experience. Over the course of the past three decades, like most clinicians, I have developed an eclectic arsenal of techniques for approaching and resolving a variety of issues and problems presented by my clients. I eventually chose to write this book in order to articulate and disseminate my perspective on how the mind works, and how to heal it, in the hope that my clients, as well as others, may benefit from my accumulated perspectives on how the mind works and heals. There is a wide variety of self help literature available for your consumption, and I encourage

you to explore it vigorously. My own offering herein is certainly not intended to be an exhaustive summary of psychological functioning, maladies, or treatment approaches, and none of the chapters are intended to provide a full scale review of a targeted area of psychology. Rather, the following pages are a summary of what I find works, in those areas where I find myself relatively effective as a psychologist.

My initial focus is upon the basic structure and functioning of the mind, as well as general principles of healing that I have found useful. The more substantial three components of this book reflect my view that mental health and satisfaction are largely dependent on our ability to manage our emotions as well as traumatic events, and to develop connectedness, both internally and externally. Thus, I will explore methods of managing, accepting, reducing, and even benefiting from a handful of our most bothersome emotions and related conditions, specifically, anxiety, depression, frustration and anger, guilt and shame, and addictive cravings. I will also look at the flip side of the coin, techniques for producing positive emotions. We will then move beyond the management of common feelings, to the management of reactions to uncommon events which we are typically not equipped to deal with, such as abuse and other traumas. Given the extent of my clinical work with traumatized individuals, I will spend a good deal of time here, initially reviewing my basic goals for managing trauma, specifically, self nurturance, containment of intrusive memories and feelings, catharsis, and reintegration of rejected, dissociated, suppressed aspects of self. We will review specific ways of developing skills in each of these areas, as a means of progressively resolving trauma and restoring both our sense of self, and our capacity for relationships in the aftermath of trauma. Finally, given my view that healthy attachment is a prerequisite for mental health, I will examine both internal and external connectedness. Specifically, we will explore the most basic connection, your relationship with yourself, as well as ways of managing what I call “normal multiplicity” in order to improve our internal cooperation, unity, and self-control. I will then explore external connectedness, both in our intimate relationships, and spiritually.

Other authors provide a myriad of alternative perspectives on the mind, and again, my intent is not to survey, judge, or compete with the refreshing variety of other treatment approaches that are available. Rather, my intent is to articulate my own understanding of the mechanics of the mind, as well as a variety of approaches that I have found useful in psychological healing. I encourage my clients to actively pursue other self help books which stimulate their curiosity and self understanding, and I hope that this book will be valuable as an additional such resource. I further hope that my offerings in the pages ahead are useful in your own pursuit of fulfillment and recovery from mental anguish, and I thank you for sharing these pages with me.

Sincerely,

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Licenced Psychologist  
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