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Creative Self-Hypnosis: New Wide-Awake, Nontrance Techniques to Empower Your Life, Work, and Relationships

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Creative Self-Hypnosis: New Wide-Awake, Nontrance Techniques to Empower Your Life, Work, and Relationships, by Roger A. Straus, Ph.D. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1989. 270 pp., \$9.95.

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Creative Self-Hypnosis offers a refreshing alternative to more traditional behavior modification books. Rather than concentrating on when or why behavior occurs, Straus advocates changing one's behavior by "changing one's reality" (97). He encourages the reader to develop, through uses of the book's visual imagery techniques and exercises, his/her own personalized self-help program. The goal of the book, according to the author, is to facilitate empowerment. By employing the book's self-management strategies, one is able to ultimately "create" a more meaningful reality.

Straus, a clinical sociologist, is the author of the 1982 book *Strategic Self-Hypnosis*, and editor of the textbook *Using Sociology: An Introduction to the Clinical Perspective*. Straus has made good use of over a decade's experience in research, teaching and practice to develop the strategies used in his newest volume.

The book not only serves as a self-help tool for individuals or groups, but is a valuable practice tool for counselors, therapists and hypnosis practitioners as well. Professionals in both the behavioral and social sciences may find it a useful teaching aid. Thus, the book has varied utility.

The format of Straus's book is almost as important as the content. The volume contains an introduction, a section titled "How to Use This Book," and seven chapters. The order of the information is deliberate and sequential, as with any good training program. Self-empowerment skills are thus obtained in a step-by-step process, beginning with a chapter entitled "Self-Management." The proceeding chapters are "Mind Control," "Effective Action," "Strategic Interaction," "Positive Relationships," "Optimal Performance," and finally, "Creative Living."

Straus's methodology incorporates both indirect and cooperative strategies for implementing change. His indirect strategy involves simply acting in the changed way to achieve the reality one desires. This purposeful "acting" may be done alone or in a cooperative way, with the support of others. Throughout the book the author offers suggestions for using his strategies with teams.

Straus's book is filled with the ideas of the many scholars and practitioners who have influenced his work. These include Herbert Blumer's well-known symbolic interaction; Erving Goffman's strategic interaction, through which, Straus says, we can analyze how we as social actors "manage impressions and

elicit desired responses from our audience" (114); Nathan Hurvitz's instrumental hypothesis, which involves reframing one's reality from a negative to a positive belief in the ability to act and subsequently change one's circumstances; and Ron Lippitt's concept of resistance, in which we attend to those internal voices that abet our resistance to positive change, thus increasing our awareness of the voices of significant others inside us.

Many sociological concepts and ideas crucial to understanding the self are introduced, and Straus does so in an engaging, and often witty manner. Complementing these concepts are three types of self-help strategies—exercises, techniques, and key tactics. Together, these are integrated with the narrative and offer a unique self-improvement program.

Although Straus's strategies are designed to complement one another, each serves a different function and can be used alone. Thus, the reader may pick and choose those he/she finds most useful. Both the exercises and techniques, as their names imply, engage the reader in some form of activity.

Exercises usually involve visual imagery in which the reader focuses on some hypothetical, everyday occurrence. In one exercise, for example, after describing a tension-filled conversation between "Ken and Barbie" (143), the author asks the reader to visually recreate it so that a more positive outcome is achieved. Another exercise consists of imagining oneself successfully accomplishing a personal goal, and then recording the experience in a journal. Both these exercises heighten the reader's awareness of how best to "create" a successful situation in reality. While readers may find a few of the exercises tedious in length, most are fun and creative.

Techniques, though similar to exercises, are more general in content and act as "pep talks" that one gives oneself. The seven techniques may involve listening to a prerecorded or spontaneous script of one's own voice or another's. They embody what is meant in the book's title by a "wide-awake, nontrance" form of "creative self-hypnosis." A partial example of the script form technique one reads:

. . . rediscovering the feelings of power and calmness, peace, energy, and strength . . . you find yourself awakening now . . . your deep power awakening . . . your abilities awakening . . . your true potential awakening . . . becoming your own . . . to focus and apply and use . . . (35)

Key tactics are more specific in focus than either exercises or techniques. In them, Straus offers concrete directions to strategically create one's reality. Key tactic number twenty-two, for example, suggests "To optimize your performance,

play with it; try never to repeat yourself exactly" (224). Straus's innovative key tactics encourage the reader to be equally creative in his/her performance.

A problem for even the most dedicated reader may be the time-consuming nature of most of the exercises, coupled with the frequency with which they occur. A great many of the exercises require either visualization, journal writing, or both. The fifth chapter, for example, includes ten exercises, along with creative self-hypnosis strategies. These can take hours, depending on the individual. Furthermore, Straus suggests that to gain the most benefit from the book, one should repeat the exercises. Persons desiring a self-help program for problems such as impatience, inability to complete tasks, or procrastination, will be put off by Straus's book before they begin to learn the strategies necessary to combat their problem(s).

In spite of the difficulty some readers may have in working on all the exercises, their diversity and number offer readers, whose needs may differ, a variety of choices. And, as previously mentioned, the volume is designed so that the reader may pick and choose those exercises that meet his/her needs.

The sociological theory contained in Straus's book lends itself well to an understanding of the practical strategies he suggests. It is my belief that the strategies in *Creative Self-Hypnosis*, when applied with some consistency, can lead to positive change in the quality of one's life. This book is innovative, optimistic and original in its approach to empowerment.

AIDS and the Allied Health Professions, edited by Joyce W. Hopp and Elizabeth A. Rogers. Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1989, 311 pp.

The Psychological Aspects of AIDS: An Annotated Bibliography, edited by Paula L. Levine, John G. Bruhn, and Norma H. Turner. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990. 576 pp., \$70.00 clothbound.

C. Allen Haney

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These two very different works have in common a concern with AIDS. Each, however, was designed to serve markedly different purposes. The first, *AIDS and the Allied Health Professions* is a collection of eleven chapters, each designed to give, in overview fashion, the necessary information to prepare and advise those in the health professions of the challenges, difficulties, and precautions to be encountered in the treatment of persons with AIDS and related diseases. Perhaps more importantly, this book sets forth the presently recommended techniques for the safety and comfort of patients and professionals alike. Chapters are, of necessity, relatively brief, easily understandable, and accurate as far as they go, taking into account the fact that each chapter addresses a topic that could