



The Gift of Therapy: An Open Letter to a New Generation of Therapists and Their Patients

By Irvin Yalom

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Anyone interested in psychotherapy or personal growth will rejoice at the publication of *The Gift of Therapy*, a masterwork from one of today's most accomplished psychological thinkers.

From his thirty-five years as a practicing psychiatrist and as an award-winning author, Irvin D. Yalom imparts his unique wisdom in *The Gift of Therapy*. This remarkable guidebook for successful therapy is, as Yalom remarks, "an idiosyncratic mÉlange of ideas and techniques that I have found useful in my work. These ideas are so personal, opinionated, and occasionally original that the reader is unlikely to encounter them elsewhere. I selected the eighty-five categories in this volume randomly guided by my passion for the task rather than any particular order or system."

At once startlingly profound and irresistibly practical, Yalom's insights will help enrich the therapeutic process for a new generation of patients and counselors.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Speaking directly to the current generation of counselors, *The Gift of Therapy* lays out simple suggestions that blend personal experience with professional objectivity. This is a book that will remind you why you entered the field in the first place. With tips on avoiding diagnosis (except for insurance purposes), when to disclose personal information, and why it's important to leave time between patient appointments, the recommendations are aimed at therapists, but they may be useful to patients who want to know what to expect from their counselors. Some references to the DSM-IV may be a little over the layperson's head, but in general the writing is clear and understandable for lay readers as well as professionals.

Each chapter is just a few pages long, a nice format for busy folks whose reading time occurs in snippets. A single topic is addressed in each chapter, and author Irvin Yalom doesn't waste any time in getting to the point. Many of the sections revolve around balancing the "magic, mystery, and authority" that come with the job of freeing your clients of their reliance on you.

From when to offer an occasional hug to finding the perfect time for deeper questioning, Yalom's experienced observations will help you achieve even greater professional effectiveness while avoiding some of the more obvious traps in this HMO-directed age of mental health care. --*Jill Lightner*

From Publishers Weekly

If the future of psychotherapy lies in psychopharmaceuticals and the short-term therapies stipulated by HMOs, argues Yalom, then the profession is in trouble. Yalom, the recipient of both major awards given by the American Psychiatric Association, professor emeritus of psychiatry at Stanford and the author of both fiction and nonfiction volumes about psychotherapy, writes this book in response to that crisis. Based on knowledge gained from his 35 years of practice, the resulting book of tips (a "gift" for the next generation of therapists) is an enlightening refutation of "brief, superficial, and insubstantial" forms of therapy. Yalom, who references Rilke and Nietzsche as well as Freud's protege Karen Horney and the founder of client-centered therapy, Carl Rogers, describes therapy as "a genuine encounter with another person." He suggests that therapists avoid making DSM IV diagnoses (except for insurance purposes), since these "threaten the human, the spontaneous, the creative and uncertain nature of the therapeutic venture." He also encourages psychotherapists to use dream analysis, group therapy and, when appropriate, wholly inventive forms of treatment. Traditionalists will probably squirm at some of his suggestions (particularly "Revealing the Therapist's Personal Life" and "Don't Be Afraid of Touching Your Patient"). Other tips, though, such as "Never Be Sexual with Patients" are no-brainers. Although the book dies somewhat in the second half, and not much here is new, the wise ideas are perfectly accessible. (Jan.)Forecast: Yalom has explored many of these ideas before. His followers will certainly be charmed, and newcomers patients as much as therapists may be won over by his openness and tender tone.

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From Library Journal

These two books defend the professional treatment of psychological problems by listening and responding in the Freudian manner, and they deplore the current dominance of neuroscience, pharmacology, and behaviorism. In *Why Psychoanalysis?*, French psychoanalyst, historian, and critic Roudinesco refers to our

"depressive society" and our loss of subjectivity in the era of individuality. She fiercely defends Freud against "fanatical" opponents, even claiming that he was not antifeminist. Roudinesco will appeal to scholars of Freud and Jacques Lacan, of whom some knowledge is assumed. Unfortunately, though Roudinesco wants psychoanalysis to be a science, she often waxes polemical when a clear, objective evaluation of Freud is needed. For that, a general audience will be better served by Elio Frattaroli's *Healing the Soul in the Age of the Brain* (LJ 8/01). For a more readable presentation of the cultural nexus of psychiatry, Julian Leff's *The Unbalanced Mind* (LJ 11/15/01) is outstanding. In *The Gift of Therapy*, Yalom (psychiatry, emeritus, Stanford) writes for both the professional and the lay reader a good idea, since educated consumers help bring professionals into the real world. He favors some self-disclosure by therapists, home visits, meeting with significant others, nonsexual touching, and time for reflection on each session. In 85 short chapters, he presents little pearls of ideas shaped from 35 years in practice. Yalom's view that the therapist is also healed in the process reminds this reviewer of James P. Carse's philosophy. Yalom's latest is essential for therapy trainers and fine for general libraries with psychology and self-help collections. For a general selection of this respected psychiatrist's earlier work, including fiction, consider *The Yalom Reader* (Basic Bks: Perseus, 1998). E. James Lieberman, George Washington Univ. Sch. of Medicine, Washington, DC
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