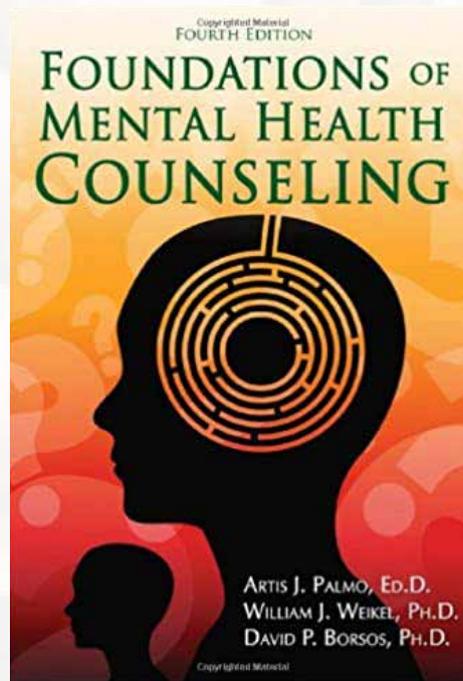


Book review

Foundations of Mental Health Counselling

By Artis J Palmo; William J Weikel; David P Borsos
 Publisher: Springfield, 2011.

Reviewed by: Nicholas Esadia and Dr. Geoffrey Wango



The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities in order to cope with ordinary or normal life issues. This includes the ability to cope with various stresses of life and living (family and at home, work and career). Ultimately, the person can relate with others and work productively and fruitfully, and thus make a contribution to their family and community. This definition of mental health includes various perspectives, that is, the physiological, psychological and mental well-being that includes perceived self-efficacy, as well as autonomy, competence, and self-actualization. It should be noted that the more encompassing definition of mental health that includes abilities and potentialities as well as our aptitude in our ability to both enjoy life and deal with various challenges takes in perspectives of cultural, positive and evolutionary psychology such as existentialism and resilience. Thus, the book under review, *Foundations of Mental Health Counselling* rightly captures the deep balance between life activities and various efforts to achieve equilibrium.

Mental health is highly significant and the understanding of it has grown tremendously over the years. People are now embracing the role of the family, work and careers, drugs and substance abuse, aging and the multiculturalism. Equally of importance is the expansion of therapy and counselling. The book links this together to offer an array of mental health issues that keep arising in an uncertain and fragile modern world. For us at this point in time, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has brought about untold suffering leading to increased fears, anxiety and uncertainties even with the now inevitable mass vaccinations. Therefore, the *Foundations of Mental Health* expands on information that is readily available in two fields, that is, mental health and counselling. This is by updating several positive changes in the field of mental health as well as counselling, including an improved definition of the concepts and the added advantage in which counsellors are largely recognized and licensed as professionals. There is the added advantage in which mental health treatment is now readily available in a number of health centres and is managed by health practitioners in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes and care organizations. It is gratifying to note the widening range of mental health issues that are now within the scope of treatment provided by mental health practitioners. Key health providers especially insurance companies have also been incorporated. This is highly significant particularly for the developing countries where there is still need to advance the provision of health facilities, particularly mental health services for a majority of people including the poor, persons in remote rural areas and other marginalised groups. Thus, there is need for improved mental health services as well as the progression of counselling.

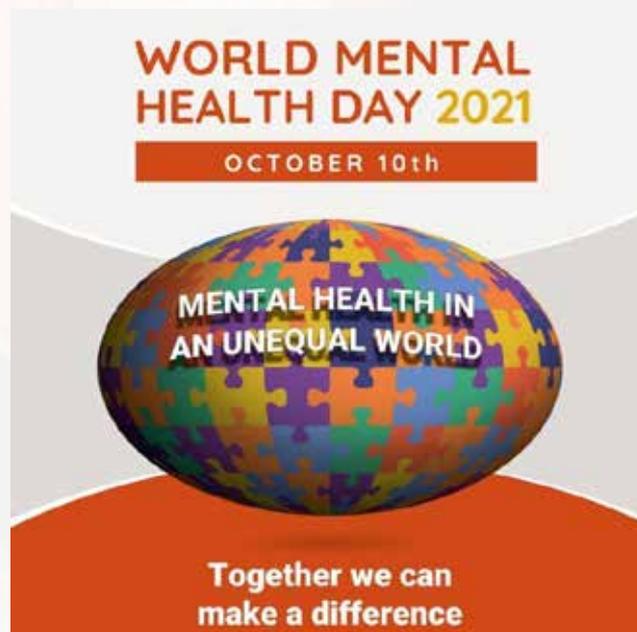
There are several authors who have contributed to various Chapters in *Foundations of Mental Health* with exciting insight into various fields and this has added to the flavour and tremendous information found in each section. The focus on each topic exhibits both the depth and breadth of the subject that includes both practical as well as theoretical concerns. In particular, it is the understanding of the history and trends of mental health and counselling that is highly significant for the practitioners especially in developing

countries and other upcoming professionals. This is because there is an ultimate need to comprehend the particular characteristics of a community, which in turn allows the identification of a variety of intervention strategies. This must commence with a historical (includes cultural) perspective for the identity and advancement of mental health and counselling psychological services. As a matter of course, various strategies suggested must in turn involve tools and constructs that underpin mental health counselling.

Consequently, the book carefully and tactfully merges three aspects of competence, that is, knowledge, ethics and practice are expounded through the role of theory (knowledge), assessment (monitoring and evaluation of counselling process - practice) and professionalism (ethics). Counsellors and other mental health practitioners must expand their expertise to cover family, career and opportunities and work

settings in both the public and private practice. These must encompass various perspectives, including multiculturalism and diversity, aging, drug and substance abuse and violence. This is because the therapist (counsellor) has a role in recovery and this may be extended to other ventures such as trauma counselling, palliative care, bereavement counselling and other areas. Amidst all these is the globalisation processes with marked trends in science and technological advancement. The book captures these details by emphasizing on the importance of these components, their integration and application in practice. The information is that the *Foundations of Mental Health Counselling* is enhanced mental health counselling services and the uniqueness of the book is in offering insight and relevance to the above topics that forms the basis of important vantage points for the reader. Clearly, over the next several years, mental health practitioners will have an enormous task as a result of the

COVID-19 and the aftermath of such a magnitude. The *Foundations of Mental Health* is an up-to-date resource and correctly points out the fact that professionals working in mental health must win over their clients and this must be commensurate by providing legislative and professional trajectories (licensure, credentialing, and effective legislation). This is a tall order for developing countries given that the place of mental health counsellors must be secured. In that case, practitioners must acquire an identity achieved majorly through the elements of professional identity as per excellence. This is the reason why this book is enriching not just in countries and instances where mental health has been more evidently established but much more among professionals and in low-and middle-income countries that require the prerequisite information that is found in this splendid book. This is the very reason why we endorse the book without reservation.



Nicholas Esadia is an Editor at the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, E-mail: nicholuskidwaro@gmail.com.

Dr. Geoffrey Wango is a Senior Lecturer in Counselling Psychology, Department of Psychology, University of Nairobi. E-mail: gwango@uonbi.ac.ke.