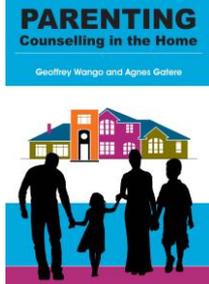


Parenting: Counselling in the Home by Geoffrey Wango and Agnes Gatere (2019). Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.



Reviewed by Dr Samuel Ngigi

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Parenting: Counselling in the Home seeks to address the challenges of parenting and provide strategic insights for counselling. The book is prepared for parents, teachers and many others involved in the art of parenting in the home context. To quote the authors: “...many parents often find parenting to be a frightening experience and are alarmed that they might not effectively meet the demands.”

The book therefore seeks to offer:

1. General principles to be taken into account in parenting; and,
2. Specific recommendations about explicit or appropriate aspects of the parent, child, home, school and community.

The authors are experienced professionals in the field of counselling and education. Dr. Geoffrey Wango is a Senior Lecturer in Counselling Psychology at the University of Nairobi, and a leading Counselling Psychologists in Kenya and in the region with several titles to his name. Agnes Gatere is a seasoned administrator currently working with the Teachers Service Commission. Subsequently, the authors offer deep insights into the ‘ways’ of parenting, including the challenges with deep implications and the ‘hows’ of meeting and overcoming them in a global perspective context.

Agreeably, parenting is always a big challenge and parents are always confronted by situations for which they must seek answers, pointing to the potential of a well-done reference book. Parents seek to better understand themselves, their own challenges and the home and other environments their children find themselves in. They fear doing things wrong, their children going astray, and generally failing to meet the goals they had when they started families. They want to understand why, despite good intentions; parenting is not going the way they envisaged. The questions that confound them and the answers they seek demand insight into the emotional and psychological dynamics of both themselves and their environments. They want to be guided on not just what they ought to do, but more importantly how to go about it and why their instinctual

approaches may not be working. *Parenting: Counselling in the Home* enables the parent to bridge the gap between thoughts and reactions, emotions and logical explanation.

Hypothetically everyone is endowed with the instinct for the basics of parenting and the authors capture this phenomenon throughout the book. Parents are often aware of the responsibilities: providing for and nurturing the child; schooling and education; making the home a bedrock for physical, emotional and psychological stability; seeing the child through the challenges of adolescence, which they themselves have gone through and therefore have ideas of; and, generally making a success of themselves and their offspring. The fact that things do not always go according to plan leads to frustration every now and then, and the need for answers is almost universal or standard. The authors are good at this and walk with the parent along this journey. Admirably, they do not in any way castigate any parent who might be struggling with parenting or criticize the inept parent which in a way is good since the task of parenting is difficult on its own.

This book is an informative, reader-friendly piece of work on parenting that provides the requisite insights thus stands a good chance in the market. The challenge, however, is that such works are never compulsory reading. There is likely no institution that requires books on parenting to teach structured courses, a pointer to the challenges of marketing such books. Therefore, it demands that both authors and publishers be acutely aware of this and they have packaged a product that has both value and appeal. The situation is made no easier by the availability of information on the Internet that the parent can access on the go whenever they need an answer. The book bridges this gap by capturing the ordinary topics as well as the intricate ones, and comes out with exceptional information that the parent will find both inclusive and exclusive.

Unlike gone-by decades when people would sit evening on end reading through books and even taking notes, modern readers are generally 'scholars in a hurry' to borrow from *journalese*. They want a publication that can provide exactly the answer they are seeking without taking them through acres of prose, packaged in a language and format that does not force a racking of the brain. In a word, unless they be scholars, readers look for reference materials where they can go to the section of interest, browse for answers then keep aside until the next challenge. To their credit, the authors of *Parenting: Counselling in the Home*, have made a commendable effort to meet the expectations of diverse readers. Great efforts have been made to present information in simple, flowing language. One rarely comes across such thorough editing in a book that has the content in context. The authors have also endeavored to address all the areas parenting is likely to provide challenges, from the first pregnancy and birth, through toddlerhood and the school years to when children leave the nest. They have addressed challenges of the home, the school, religion, faith and spiritualism and everywhere else parents and their children are likely to find themselves in. They have pinpointed emotional and psychological challenges likely to be encountered in the endeavor to excel, offered insights and suggested intervention strategies.

The authors have made good effort to communicate in simple language. At first, I was critical of this till I had a quick look at their PowerPoint Presentations and

then realized the importance of talking to their readers in a simple straight forward way. For instance, certain sections can actually be read and understood by young people, which in several ways is highly encouraging. The short sentences quicken the pace of reading and get to the facts for the 'hurried scholar.'

The authors have carefully balanced between general information and common statements as well as universal truths and deeply explored their exceptions and added logic and information. In my view, it is these exceptions that wrap up the social and psychological deviance that will in the end attract many people to read this book besides parents and teachers seeking additional assistance. For example, it is true we all want to be happy together as a family, but the authors maintain a general rhythmic pattern that passes on the message that parenting requires effort and hard work. Again, we all know that there are sources of stress, but the authors point out the need to identify sources of stress and deal with distress amicably. Part of the reason that the book dwells on counselling in the home is to offer guidance to people, including parents and teachers, so that though they may not achieve the ideal, they can still understand why and how they can regain their goals. This book both addresses the challenges and is at hand to offer options out of them.

Parenting: Counselling in the Home is an ambitious work that attempts to look at several facets of parenting. It is reader friendly in terms of organization and appeal. In itself, parenting is a graduated and well-ordered activity. It starts with the decision between a man and a woman, or by a woman or a man, to have a child. The pregnancy is a first-time experience, as is getting the first child and taking him or her through toddlerhood, to childhood, to puberty and adolescence, and on the path to being grown up. The parent seeking information is particular. The first-time parent wants to know how to handle the baby, and his/her needs are separate from those of the parent to a pre-teen. The book has a more focused organization, where the challenges of every phase of parenting are handled exhaustively in several chapters. This kind of work is likely to attract page-by-page readers, and would also be a handbook where readers look up the information they need and keep it aside, to return when the next challenge comes up. The authors have done splendid work.

For marketing if not for anything else, books need to have a targeted, identifiable audience. Parenting targets spouses, parents, children, counsellors, teachers and social workers such as members of the clergy. As the title suggests, this is a work on parenting and parents are the principle target. Still, others like counsellors, psychologists, teachers and social workers including the clergy can also take a keen interest and find substantial information on children, growth and development. This benefits the books prospects as it treats parents as the principle targets and addresses everything from their perspective, the target being to make them better at managing all the aspects of the child and home environment. The book seeks to empower parents to be effective counsellors by opening up the world to them so that they understand better what their child or children are going through. The content of the book is strong, addressing self-awareness and improvement, focusing on parenting.

The layout of the book, including the cover is carefully designed and matches with the overall theme. The work also contains many boxed chunks of information and these are likely to be the central focus for parents who want zones of concentration. Generally, boxes are used to capture crucial points discussed in the text, a kind of a bird's eye view of the text. In this book, the textboxes carry certain extra information, and I am sure this is because the authors know parents want first and fast information, not text, again an advantage to the reader though I am sure it must have cost the authors many months of editing and fixing relevant information in appropriate sections. In the end, the boxes help the reader to quickly look up and grasp the information. There is also an attempt to present key points in the form of acronyms. Again, the acronyms assist to better the readers understanding as the information is precise and in single sentences, which makes for splendid reading.

Certainly, the authors know their readers, and the parents will gladly welcome the book.

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