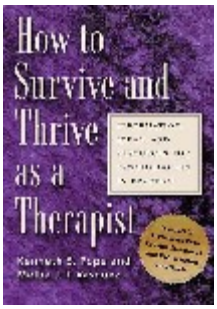
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Questions I Wish I Had Asked Before I Started in Practice

A Review of

How to Survive and Thrive as a Therapist: Information, Ideas, and Resources for Psychologists in Practice
by Kenneth S. Pope and Melba J. T. Vasquez
Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005. 421 pp. ISBN 1-59147-231-8. $49.95, paperback

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Reviewed by
Jack G. Wiggins

How to Survive and Thrive as a Therapist: Information, Ideas, and Resources for Psychologists in Practice "presents in a concise format information, ideas, and resources for the practicalities of practice" (p. xi). Kenneth S. Pope and Melba J. T. Vasquez, the authors, have recognized that the greatest difficulty in starting any task is to know how to begin. Whether starting a practice or changing an established practice requires knowing one's self and accepting circumstances and the therapist, as they exist today. Pope and Vasquez gently and successfully lead the readers through a series of questions to help therapists find a comfortable fit for their goals in the changing market for psychological services.

How to Survive and Thrive as a Therapist is a great gift from the experiences of two successful practitioners. A half century ago when I opened my own office, the practice of psychology outside of institutions was unexplored territory. There were no maps or benchmarks by which to measure one's occupational aspirations. There were no guidelines on how to list one's psychological practice in the yellow pages of the telephone directory. The American Psychological Association (APA) had not addressed this issue. The Cleveland Psychological Association (CPA) decided to establish a practice referral service. I was selected to chair a committee to define how psychologists could list their practice in the telephone directory. It was not possible to mention the word *therapy* in the listing because Ohio law defined psychotherapy as a medical specialty—and psychology was not even licensed as a profession. The recommendations for listing of a psychological practice were accepted by CPA and were later adopted by APA. Now Pope and Vasquez generously offer timely ideas and essential resources for success in today's era of radical changes in the emerging health care system and other venues of practice.

The book begins with a chapter titled "Who Are You and What Is Important to You?" as the key to a meaningful practice. If these two pages are not enough to stimulate deep thought, the reader might refer to the parable of the mice in *Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal With Change in Your Work and Your Life* (Johnson, 1998). This reference may be especially useful to those who are frustrated with the abuses of power by managed care or are dissatisfied with their current practice. The practice market for psychology does not belong to anyone. It is up to each therapist to find his or her way through the maze of the marketplace to the cheese.

The rest of the 15 chapters focus on developing a business plan, self-care strategies, liability coverage, and other essentials of building and maintaining a practice, such as finding an office, finding an attorney, and formulating business policies and referrals. Each of these chapters has many important issues to think about and to settle before starting or changing an established practice. Having a professional will for the assets of one's practice and patient records is something that was rarely considered before the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 regulations became law. There are four separate chapters regarding issues that are often lumped under the heading of malpractice,

including ethics, pitfalls in psychological assessment, logical fallacies, and rationalizations. In retrospect, I cannot find any chapters that I would leave out.

In addition to these 15 useful chapters, there are 15 appendixes of standards and guidelines adopted by the APA or the Canadian Psychological Association. Trying to assemble all of these professional guidelines is time consuming and frustrating. It is a blessing to have quick access to this compendium of practice guidelines. The appendixes include APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct, the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, APA Record Keeping Guidelines, Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations, Guidelines for Psychological Evaluations of Child Protection, Guidelines for Practice With Older Adults, Strategies for Private Practitioners Coping With Subpoenas or Compelled Testimony for Client Records or Test Data, as well as other resources.

There are two issues that I would have highlighted in the presentations. The first would be to address advocacy more fully. The need for therapists to actively participate in professional advocacy for the benefit of their patients and their practice needs a separate chapter. Second, the power of political giving is also worthy of special consideration. One of the meanings of therapy is the power to heal. Patients and the public expect therapists to have the power to heal and bestow healing on them. Thus, there is an expectation that the therapist is a “giver.” Therapists can enhance their professional stature and therapeutic aura by financially supporting political candidates and contributing to community causes. This helps the therapist to survive.

Giving also transforms therapists with their power as a giver. Therapists begin to thrive when they see the results of their giving. Nowadays, therapists often express feeling they are underappreciated and are discouraged with managed care. Therapists describe feeling helpless and used up by working extra hours to maintain their present standard of living. Many feel beaten up by the abusive restrictions on psychological practice by so-called insurers of mental health care. Therapists in this mode shrink from giving and participating in community affairs. Giving to others can change this. The story of Agnes in *The Apollo of Bellac: A Play in One Act* (Giraudoux, 1954) amply illustrates this transforming effect of giving over a sense of powerlessness. Agnes, feeling she has little to offer, shyly applies for a cleaning job at the corporation. Her gift of empowering others by enabling them to see value in themselves results in her rapid assent on the corporate ladder and ends in her being happily married to the chairman of the board. Although professional practice is more than a one-act French play, it does illustrate the transforming power of giving.

How to Survive and Thrive as a Therapist is a refreshing book of empowerment for therapist colleagues. It is a demonstration of the value of giving. Pope and Vasquez are both living examples of thriving by sharing their experiences with others, giving to their profession, and even caring for injured animals that cannot survive without assistance. Perhaps giving is too close to the authors' personal styles to be able to write objectively about giving in their efforts to empower other therapists. Although the book is a quick read, it is worth keeping close at hand to digest the wisdom of questions to ask one's self in quiet moments of reflection. It also supplies many resources for guidance from the standards of the profession of psychology.

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