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# Reviews

Book Review

## ***Peace Inside — A Prisoner's Guide to Meditation***

By: Sam Settle (ed)

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

ISBN: 978-1-78592-235-0

(paperback)

Price: £12.99 (paperback)

In this friendly and accessible book, Sam Settle, Director of the Prison Phoenix Trust (PPT), provides a beginner's guide to the principles of meditation. Containing a foreword by the poet and PPT patron Benjamin Zephaniah, and featuring helpful illustrations by Pollyanna Morgan, *Peace Inside* combines concise instructions with candid prisoner testimony.

The book is split into two parts. The first, divided into five chapters, deals with the practicalities of meditation. Chapter 1 explains what meditation is and isn't, by dispelling some of the fallacies associated with the practice. Of particular use to beginners is an explanation of the links between meditation and religion, assuring us that while many religions allow and encourage meditation, faith is by no means a prerequisite for experiencing its benefits. Chapter 2 offers simple step-by-step instructions on how to meditate, including an explanation on the particulars of breathing and descriptions of related exercises requiring different levels of difficulty. Information is given on how to arrange the posture, eyes and hands, and on how to manage a wandering attention. The following two chapters expand on this theme by including information on external distractions, providing advice on how to maintain the correct approach when meditating and listing principles known to help individuals stay on track. Particular emphasis is placed on the value of simply accepting whatever thought or emotion is dominating the mind, before brief explanations are given about the specific benefits which this acceptance engenders.

If one criticism could be levelled at *Peace Inside* it would be that Chapter 4, which lists the more conventional distractions associated with meditation, reiterate the points discussed in the previous chapter. The section would arguable read better if the chapters were combined or even switched, as, confusingly, Chapter 3 offers solutions to issues which are then expanded on in Chapter 4. This is a minor criticism, however, and Part one concludes with a brief essay on meditation in day-to-day life in which Settle describes the benefits of how meditative principles can affect everyday perceptions. He assures the reader that by harnessing the proper temperament and a hyper-sensitivity of our senses, the sights, smells and sounds of our daily life can render our environment a much more rewarding place in which to live.

Part two of *Peace Inside* is easily the larger portion of the book. Epistolary in format it is comprised of correspondences between volunteers from the PPT, and individuals in prisons and secure hospitals. The letters are sectioned into six categories: 'Anger'; 'Hope'; 'Love'; 'Being with the Blues'; 'Out of the Madness' and 'Gratitude', each of which Settle prefaces with an insightful narrative into how meditation can impact on prisoners' lives. As expected, meditation is indeed an invariable theme woven throughout the exchanges, although the accounts of the men and women at the heart of these undoubtedly give *Peace Inside* an appeal and a value far surpassing that of a simple meditation guidebook. In parts edifying and amusing, in others brave and cathartic, part two catalogues some of the issues familiar to many prisoners who are struggling to make sense of an often alien and uncooperative system. Correspondents discuss themes ranging from drug addiction and sexual abuse to the

ostensibly trivial gripes of withheld mail and cell sharing—one man recounts the frustration of living with an inconsiderate cellmate, while another describes finding serenity and contentment despite having to share his Bangkok cell with 50 other men. Many of the correspondences span lengthy periods, enabling the reader to follow the prisoners' journey of recovery and self-discovery, and, in the case of Darren, his progression through the system from Wakefield's infamous Cage to his eventual graduation from a PIPE (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment) unit.

Ultimately, *Peace Inside* succeeds both as a practical introduction to meditation and as a journal of the ways in which the practice has benefited individuals' lives. Settle's uncomplicated style ensures that the instructions in part one are clear and easy to follow, while Pollyanna Morgan's illustrations provide a charming supplement to the text. The correspondences in part two, featuring testimony from prisoners, reflect the kindness of the PPT volunteers who greet their struggles with friendship and support, together providing a connectivity and a resolution for prisoners who might be experiencing similar issues. Refreshingly, the book does not promote meditation as a panacea, instead opting to underscore the dedication required to allay the frustrations the practice evokes in even the most experienced practitioner; nor is it a guide about yoga, a point that Settle is quick to highlight, with the PPT already providing free books and CDs on this discipline. It primarily being aimed at prisoners, *Peace Inside* is a simple and engaging guide suitable for anybody interested in learning about how meditation can affect their life.

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Book Review

**Sexual Offenders—Personal Construct Theory and Deviant Sexual Behaviour**

By James Horley

Publisher: Routledge (2008)

ISBN: 978-1-58391-735-0

Price: £40.00

The spectre of the sex offender and the matter of sexual assault has remained prominent in society, media, law and politics for many years. Today it is arguably one of the most important issues being faced by the criminal justice system, not just in the UK, but across the globe. Largely this is due to the disclosures from hundreds of victims of Jimmy Savile, the ensuing criminal investigation into historic child sexual abuse 'Operation Yewtree' and the subsequent arrests of high-profile celebrities, politicians and public servants. Therefore, any text that helps to shed light and understanding onto the nature of sexual offending and those who commit such offences, is of great importance.

Despite being written in 2008, Horley's book is potentially more important to scholars and policy makers than at its inception. The shift in academic and criminal justice focus has enabled this book to explain alternative views about the nature of sexual offending. It starts with an explanation of populist views of sex offenders and why and how they commit their crimes. Horley explains that not all sex offenders should be labelled as the same, controversially stating that the creation of the 'Other' (child sex offender/paedophile) is potentially damaging and isolates the offender further (p. 23). Furthermore, he posits how the social view of the 'Other' is incorrect and that sexual offenders offend for a multitude of reasons, that create individualisation of onset of offending. With this he says, 'we should probably avoid categorical views that force 'Us' to view 'Them' as different and frightening creatures. They are us, and we are them' (p. 23).

*Sexual Offenders* is a significantly important book, because of the alternative approach the author takes to develop the readers understanding of how to treat these offenders, often in a clinical setting. Through the use of Personal Construct Theory (PCT), Horley uses knowledge, experience and real-life cases to paint a picture of the damage that labelling and stigma can have on people who commit sexual offences. He explains that sexual offenders often want to remain offence free and move away from the cycle of abusive behaviour, but they are often limited as their own self-image and self-worth is negative. The PCT approach, acknowledges that a person has a choice to desist from sexual offending, they just need to understand how to unlock this choice.

Overall, this book is a fascinating, complex and intelligent read. It will be of use to academics, students with an interest in the dynamics of sexual offending, clinicians, practitioners, policy makers and those involved in the criminal justice system.

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Book review

**Improving Criminal Justice Workplaces: Translating theory and research into evidence-based practice**

By Paula Brough, Jennifer Brown and Amanda Biggs

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 978-1-138-01946-1

Price: £90.00

Given the much discussed issue of recruitment and retention of prison staff in English and Welsh prisons, it is apt that this book aims to be a practical guide to improving well-being for criminal justice workers. Improving well-being in the

workplace can certainly aid the retention of staff. This text aims to help managers achieve this by bridging the gap between practical best-practice solutions and the vast (and sometimes dense) academic literature on organisational behaviour. Uniquely, the advice proffered is based on what works in the criminal justice field, with a strong bent towards the public sector. The authors certainly cite what they describe as the 'widespread demoralisation' of criminal justice workers caused by 'increased austerity' as key to making use of the evidence-based policies that they propose. Although the authors have a strong Australasian foundation, both Paula Brough and Jennifer Brown have made significant occupational academic and consultative contributions to criminal justice within the UK, and the book has been explicitly written for an international audience.

This book forms part of the Routledge frontiers of criminal justice series and has been designed along the lines of the strategic foresight framework.<sup>1</sup> This future orientated framework comprises of six steps namely: framing the issue, scanning the environment, forecasting alternative scenarios, visioning the preferred scenario, planning for this scenario and taking action. Based on this framework the book is subsequently divided into three parts. Part one concerns framing issues; this mainly concerns describing the key aspects that underpin criminal justice organisational behaviour, including employee engagement and procedural justice amongst others. Part two provides an explanation of tools that can be used to provide empirical evidence. Finally, part three links a few key organisational problems with solutions and addresses the main aim of the book; namely to translate research into implementable strategies.

Most usefully, this book clearly identifies some of the key issues that most large organisations face,

1. Hines, A and Bishop, P. (eds) (2006) *Thinking about the future: guidelines for strategic foresight*. Washington DC: Social Technologies.



such as effective communication and combating bullying and discrimination, but appear to be more pertinent in the criminal justice field. Crucially, towards the end of the book, the authors have linked these key issues with pioneering international examples of criminal justice agencies who have overcome each problem fairly successfully. There is also some discussion regarding the tools to assess organisational behaviour and a call for closer links between criminal justice agencies and

universities, something that has certainly gathered pace in the UK in recent times. As the authors note it is key that managers across the criminal justice sector stay informed of the developing issues facing their workforce, but this may mean that despite this book taking advantage of being topical, it could quickly become dated.

Overall, this book achieves its aims of providing a clear link between evidence and practice. It is certainly useful to practitioners who may have specific organisational

goals or problems to solve, as well as students looking to enter the field, as it is clearly laid out and relatively simple to digest. However, it may quickly become dated and therefore hopefully will prompt continued contributions from academics and closer ties between their institutions and criminal justice agencies around the world.

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