

Just what the doctor ordered

A review of Allen & Brock's Health care communication using personality type

Amanda Johnston

The last issue of the Australian Psychological Type Review featured an article from Judith Allen and the late Susan Brock on the application of type to health care. AusAPT Vice President Amanda Johnston here reviews Allen & Brock's recent book on that subject.

This book is a very easy read. Aimed at MBTI practitioners and non-users alike, it is based on many years of research within health care settings, and quotes many other renowned authors and their models and philosophies.

Susan A Brock researched whether type preferences influenced communication in practical influencing situations such as leading, working in teams, coaching, managing, sales, consulting and the like. Allen and Brock adapted this research to develop a model that applies type preferences to communication in health care settings. The model, *FLEX Care*[™], labels the stages of interaction as initiating the interaction; investigating needs and suggesting a course of action; and next steps or closing. The book seems to expand logically on aspects of this model.

Quotes from patients and their carers give wonderful insights into the thought processes, perceptions and beliefs of a large number of respondents—many of which, it is postulated, can be related to type preferences. When reading these case studies the reader cannot help feeling the tragic irony that Susan Brock herself died last year as a result of cancer. I felt the terrible loss to the community of a person so obviously committed to her field of endeavour—building relationships between clients and care providers.

The book includes many exercises, case studies and models that could be used in training, coaching and counselling situations, with prior written permission.

Chapters are devoted to the discussion of issues such as: using a knowledge of psychological type when breaking bad news; encouraging patients to follow clinical advice and working together; using type as a tool for personal and professional development; and creating committed action. The final chapter lists further suggested reading, and type associations across the world. A pity AusAPT does not appear ... perhaps in the next edition!

What I enjoyed most were the very poignant personal stories that sparked a range of emotions—from tears to laughter to downright anger at the experiences some people had suffered.

A great read: it should be compulsory pre-reading for every educator in the medical arena and every would-be doctor, nurse or allied professional. Let's hope that we see this book at the top of reading lists at every university and learning institution that teaches subjects related to the caring professions. ❖

Judith Allen & Susan A Brock 2000, *Health care communication using personality type: Patients are different*, Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, and London: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-21374-6.

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Amanda works for South Australia's Department of Human Services. As Staff Training and Development Manager for the Financial Services Division, working with accountants and economists, she is learning what it is like to be in a TJ world.

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In my practical medical work ... I have long been struck by the fact that besides the many individual differences in human psychology there are also typical differences. Two types especially become clear to me; I have termed them the introverted and the extraverted types.

The opening paragraph of Jung's *Psychological types*

Confidence in the practitioner is half of medicine.

John Fowles 1969, *The French lieutenant's woman*

[Mayo Clinic] researchers monitored 556 people, noted what the doctor told each patient, followed the patients home and asked what they had heard. The patients 'did not mention 68% of the health problems diagnosed', the study found ... 'denial' and 'selective listening' were the main techniques used to ignore medical advice.

New Scientist, 1 February 1997

Tell him what a dreadful state I am in — that I am frightened out of my wits; and have such tremblings, such flutterings, all over me, such spasms in my side, and pains in my head, and such beatings at heart, that I can get no rest by night nor by day.

And tell my dear Lydia not to give any directions about her clothes, till she has seen me, for she does not know which are the best warehouses.

(Mrs Bennet's material preoccupations endure, even through the trauma of daughter Lydia's elopement.)

Jane Austen 1811, *Pride and prejudice*

"Don't try to understand 'em, just throw and rope and brand 'em" sings camp old Frankie Laine over the Rawhide credits—and five'll get you ten he's singing about an ante-natal clinic.

Julie Burchill 1987, *Damaged gods*

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