

BOOK REVIEW

The Whole Sphere: Supporting Well-being and Recovery from Relational Trauma

Nicki Weld

Dunmore Publishing, Auckland, New Zealand 2014

ISBN 978-1-927212-19-6, pp.129, Paperback. AU\$33

Nicki Weld's book, *The Whole Sphere: Supporting Well-being and Recovery from Relational Trauma*, offers an accessible and practical guide for everyone.

Weld introduces the key message of her book on the opening page. "To live a full life", she says, "we need to operate from a place of well-being, health and wholeness, supported by attending to all aspects of our self" (p. 7). Expanding on Sir Mason Durie's model of mental health, Te Whare Tapu Wha, where "wairua (spirit), wh nau (family), hinengaro (the psychological aspect) and tinana (the physical aspect)" (Weld, 2014, p. 7) are the cornerstones for attending to well-being, Weld introduces her own model.

This model, "Sphere – a model of wellbeing", derives its name from an acronym of its component parts or aspects which comprise the "spiritual, physical, hope, emotional, relational, engagement" (p. 8). Weld has created from these aspects a symbol of a sphere, where the spiritual aspect sits in the centre representing "the heart or energy of who we are" (p. 8) and is surrounded by the other five dimensions.

Explaining how, "for ultimate well-being we need to consciously attend to all of these aspects on a daily basis" (p. 9), Weld explores the interconnectedness between them and some of the consequences should we neglect one or more of these aspects. This leads into a discussion of the effects of relational trauma and the impact this can have on those aspects identified as central to wellbeing, particularly if the relational trauma occurs in childhood. This discussion is supported by a useful summary of the indicators and impacts of relational trauma on the six aspects of wellbeing (p. 14).

Following this introduction, the book is organised into six chapters each of which considers one aspect of the wellbeing sphere. For each chapter Weld provides an overview and discussion of a particular aspect of wellbeing and includes examples and suggestions for maintenance and development. She then considers the impact of relational trauma on that aspect, again offering suggestions and ideas. The chapters finish with a conclusion and a summary table of ideas on how to support that wellbeing aspect.

The book is drawn together in the final chapter (7) *Assessment and application*. Here “The three houses self-assessment tool” (p. 107), which Weld and a colleague had earlier developed, is presented. The three houses represent the worries, the strengths and the hopes and dreams which individuals (adults and children) hold. Weld describes this as a visual tool of words and pictures where, by identifying and separating the elements, they can be externalised and more easily explored. Using the tool to map a person’s wellbeing, Weld provides suggestions and activities to guide the reader to an overview, where, now able to see the big picture, s/he can make decisions about how to address any issues. A useful table, *Summary of well-being indicators* (p. 110) provides a well-timed balance to the earlier table (p. 14) which itemised the impact of relational trauma in these same areas. Weld encourages readers to develop a plan by which they will take action, and lists a variety of simple and practical ways this can happen. Once again the chapter concludes with a very helpful summary of ideas, drawn from all the content of the book, of how to support wellbeing.

Weld’s stated intent with this book is to offer “ideas and ways to attend to each aspect of our sphere to support wholeness and wellness, and also [to offer] ways to assist with recovery from relational trauma due to the known impact it has on wellbeing” (p. 18). She is clear however, that the book is not intended to replace “professional support” but, rather, it may assist those engaging with such processes.

In my opinion Weld achieves her aim. Positioned between a self-help manual and a reference book for practitioners, this volume has much to offer a range of readers. The language is simple, clear and inclusive. Whilst there are references to other authors, theory and research throughout the book, these are not intrusive but rather provide a source for the information provided and allow for other opinions which, in turn, provide leads for those readers who wish for deeper knowledge and understanding. Weld peppers the chapters with her own experiences, both personal and professional, which add credibility to the ideas and activities she describes.

The Whole Sphere: Supporting Well-being and Recovery from Relational Trauma provides a valuable resource for those who have experienced relational trauma, for those who are working in roles to support them and for those who simply wish to enhance and develop their own strategies of self-care and wellbeing. It is the sort of book which helping practitioners from any field could share with those with whom they are working. With only 123 pages of text it is an accessible read and a book which can be read from start to finish or it can be dipped into according to interest and need. The ideas and suggestions are practical, easy to understand and, for the most part, readily accessible to readers.

Allyson Davys

Supervision Consultant
Hamilton, New Zealand