



A Perilous Calling: The Hazards of Psychotherapy Practice

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What are the consequences of prolonged exposure to the mental and emotional sufferings of others? In what ways can the practice of psychotherapy impede a person's ability to form healthy, fulfilling personal relationships? Is it true that psychotherapists are unusually prone to mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual acting out, workaholism, and suicide? Is there something about people who are drawn to a life in psychotherapy that puts them at higher risk of developing certain behavioral disorders?

Now in a candid and revealing look into the private and professional lives of psychotherapists, a group of noted practitioners attempt to answer these and other hard questions about the women and men who pursue this most perilous of callings.

Throughout the pages of this fascinating book, nearly thirty psychotherapists—including psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and social workers--provide intimate, at times painfully frank, accounts of their inner experiences and struggles. In a series of compelling first-person narratives, written in a variety of styles, they explore such topics as the therapist's personal development and unconscious motivations for becoming a therapist, the emotional impact of clinical work on the psychotherapist, the stresses and strains that the practice of psychotherapy can exert on a marriage, parenting and psychotherapy, disillusionment and the physical and psychic isolation of clinical work, the struggles of therapists who suffer from characterological problems of their own, and the extreme perils of dealing with suicidal patients. They also delve into a number of important professional, ethical, and legal hazards practitioners face in this age of the medical "quick-fix."

A Perilous Calling offers readers unparalleled insight into the psychotherapist's deepest concerns and conflicts. It reveals the perils of practice and candidly explores how some psychotherapists have learned to cope with them. In reading this book, professionals will learn how to take better care of themselves both in their professional and personal lives and will find new ways to transform those perils into opportunities for growth and mastery. At the same time, their patients, friends, and loved ones will gain a deeper understanding of these complex and uniquely caring individuals.

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