



Counseling by Carolyn: A guide to the Corn Cob, Kernels of Help Whether or Not You Make an Appointment

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This is a common sense self-help book packed with accessible suggestions for confronting negative emotions.

Carolyn Kay Jahan's *Counseling by Carolyn* is a self-help work that suggests fundamental skills for managing negative emotions and thoughts, and their symptoms.

The book first explains the rules that help to determine one's level of control, and that guide the steps that should be taken in any given scenario. The rest of its material is organized into three sections. The first suggests techniques for dealing with anxiety and depression, along with other negative feelings, like guilt. The second includes techniques that promote self-awareness. In the third section, the book collects motivational quotes, notes, and songs.

The actions proposed for alleviating common feelings of anxiety, depression, guilt, anger, and negative thoughts are accessible and easy to execute. They include taking deep breaths, accepting feelings of anxiety and allowing them to pass, and using distraction as a way to handle the effects of adrenaline. However, a lot of the book's information, as with its coverage of the symptoms of depression and the positive impact of sleep on mental health, is too familiar to be revelatory. More distinct is the book's use of analogies to illustrate its points, as of farmers planting corn, despite not being able to predict whether the plants will grow, as an analogy for how unproductive it is to worry about the future; and of those same farmers acknowledging their disappointment during a bad harvest, but learning from it and moving on, which is used to explain the purpose of feelings and how to evaluate whether they are rational.

But the book is short considering the amount of work it aims to do, and its last section, which is purely inspirational, highlights its limited scope. When tackling common emotions, it constrains itself to exploring minor causes: anger arising from arguments between siblings, or worry around the outcome of a test. Because of this, its advice will prove less helpful when it comes to tackling more serious sources of negativity, like death, illness, and anxiety from childhood traumas.

Throughout, cartoon illustrations are used to amplify important information, as of different personality types, the adrenaline responses in the face of threats to one's physical safety, and the need to give one's body a break. Other illustrations, as with a timeline diagram to help with cultivating positive thoughts about the future, could be jumping-off points to put the book's advice into action. Also helpful is the book's tendency to define psychological concepts in everyday terms.

Counseling by Carolyn is a self-help work that suggests means of handling challenges like anxiety and depression.

EDITH WAIRIMU (October 29, 2021)

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