
Dr. Dutton had his first edition of this book published in 1998 and in 2003 revised and expanded the chapter on treatment for a paperback edition. This second edition has further revisions plus two new chapters: “The Sociopsychoneurobiology of Attachment,” and “Longitudinal Development and Female Abusive Personalities.” It is divided into a preface, eleven chapters, and a subject index. The first chapter is an introduction to the topic and the history of its study discussing, among others, the way—the social sciences took notice of intimate partner violence (IPV) and how such behaviors were viewed and studied over the course of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Nine chapters follow which are interconnected by the author’s continuing review of theories and experimental studies into the possible antecedents, modifiers, and perpetrators of IPV and how each assists toward, or detracts from, our ultimate ability to understand and treat it. These explanations begin with modeling and learning theory, and move among psychoanalytic and other psychological approaches, feminist writings, attachment theory, and finally functional brain imaging studies. All of the major theorists in the field are represented in these chapters, from “Bowlby to Walker,” so to speak. There are several notable statements, such as Erich Fromm’s observation that, “Anger converts a feeling of impotence into a feeling of omnipotence.” Another pithy comment notes that, “Both

aggression and achievement start from the perception that circumstances are controllable . . . [but] aggression is designed to control and change people.” But in the end each of the theoretical constructs has problems explaining at least some of the differing aspects of IPV. Throughout the book, Dr. Dutton touches on his own synthesis, which involves an abusive, more or less borderline and cyclical, personality organization developed in early and imperfect interactions with the mother and father and perpetuated by subsequent trauma. The eleventh and final chapter focuses on treatment.

This book’s central theme is presented compellingly. The middle nine chapters are constructed much like directions to an ultimate destination. Helpful figures, diagrams, and results tables are included as necessary. Most chapters have notes about the details of the text, and each chapter ends with a lengthy listing of references. The findings from the other chapters are utilized to describe the underpinnings of the treatment program that Dr. Dutton has been working on since the late seventies. He mentions in several places the differences between his ideal for a treatment program and the fairly well-known “Duluth model” for the treatment of batterers. His approach differs in several ways, including its use of cognitive behavioral techniques and its focus on the key role of the therapeutic bond. He states that it is important not to confront the abuser too quickly due to the shame the abuser already feels, lest a good therapeutic bond not be formed, and yet acknowledges that confrontation of some nature must occur before too long. He includes discussions of female to female violence in lesbian relationships and reciprocal (or “both partners”) violence that occurs in a measurable sub-segment of heterosexual violence, topics that many past books on abuse and battering have glossed over quickly or skipped entirely.

This is a book that anyone who deals with partner-related violence might find helpful, whether they already know a lot or a little about the subject matter. Psychiatrists, emergency department or family physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and trainees for any of the helping professions will each find that portions of this text speak to them and to the needs of their patients or clients. I found it very helpful in preparing for my own lecture on “Domestic Violence” for our third-year psychiatry residents.


Bipolar disorder (BPD) is probably one of the most fascinating and most confusing psychiatric disorders at the same time. It is fascinating because of the multiplicity of

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