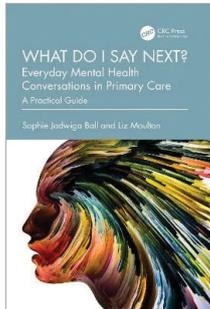


Book review

What do I say next? Everyday mental health conversations in primary care

Authors: Sophie Jadwiga Ball, Liz Moulton
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Every general practitioner (GP) will be keenly aware of the challenges of facilitating often long conversations around mental health in limited consultation time. Written with primary care providers

in mind, this guide sets out to describe ways of structuring and navigating these consultations with different psychological strategies.

The first section of the book focuses on the bones of the consultation itself. It covers core principles such as open and closed questions and provides acronyms for mental health history taking. Most helpfully, the authors also provide concise explanations of established and evidence-based psychology models, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), acceptable commitment therapy (ACT) and graded exposure, among others. This is a convenient and pragmatic summary, not only to understand the models from which many of the proposed psychological strategies borrow from, but also to have a deeper appreciation of the therapies we are often referring our patients for. Despite a few pages addressing the Royal College of General Practitioners' (UK) curriculum, this section remains vastly relevant for Australian general practice.

Written for GPs, and by GPs, the strength of this book lies in its practical second half.

Section two emphasises a 'transdiagnostic approach' and is subdivided into chapters that focus on common presenting complaints (eg low mood), certain populations (eg young people) and specific situations (eg conversations when there is not much time). Each chapter contains several cases, complete with suggested tools, potential ways the patient might respond, and how to thus guide the conversation. Some tools that I found most helpful for my own practice were activity layering (behaviour activation) and the use of metaphors to aid communication. A structured way of conducting a 'one-minute safety check' to explore suicidality was particularly revelatory. In using accessible language and clear explanations, the authors ensure that any new techniques can be easily implemented in the next consultation.

Readers, especially experienced GPs, might find that some of the proposed tools mirror strategies already being used. Nevertheless, this book will prompt reflection upon existing practices and introduce new approaches. For trainees and those looking to improve their mental health skills, however, this book is an invaluable guide and will be a worthy addition to any consulting room shelf.

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