

Book Review

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia: What Everyone Needs to Know

By Steven R. Sabat

Oxford University Press: New York, US, 2018; 256pp.

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Integrating the bio-medical, psychological, and social perspectives, Sabat provides a comprehensive introduction to dementia and dementia care in this book. The rigorous scientific evidence along with the touching real-life cases makes it an ideal first book for academics, practitioners, and family caregivers working or living with dementia. Each concept and terminology is explained in comprehensible yet accurate language with vivid examples. The book is written in question-and-answer format, addresses a multitude of specific issues related to dementia, including the bio-medical nature of dementia, the lived experience of dementia, the social environment and discourses surrounding dementia, recent theoretical breakthroughs regarding the life world of people with dementia, as well as different care models. The answers, admittedly brief, are replete with clear illustration and relevant research findings, guiding readers toward deepened meaning-making schemes and strengthened practical techniques. The first two chapters focus on a biological explanation of dementia, familiarizing readers with the pathology, syndromes, and pharmacological treatments of dementia. The third chapter depicts the subjective experience of dementia, shifting the focus to the person. Breaking the pathological imagination of people with dementia, Sabat advocates for respecting individual difference, active listening to the person,

making sense of every happening when interacting with them, and paying attention to their in-context capacities instead of capacities measured by standardized instruments. Instead of impaired functions, purpose of life, choice making, agency and being of help are still, if not more, important at this stage of life. Chapter 4 and 5 critically introduce a collection of academic works that have challenged the deficiency-based understanding of dementia and transformed the discourses and practices surrounding dementia. Concepts like resilience, selfhood, creativity, and playfulness are explored in this population, creating powerful counter narratives to the stigmatized image of dementia. Chapter 6 and 7 focus on the caring relationships and the potentials in life with dementia. Sabat ruptures the caregiver-care recipient dichotomy by pointing out the possibility for caregivers to enjoy and benefit from caring, and he highly recommends innovative practices such as arts-based programs and play-based programs, as they encourage authentic communications and creative interactions people with dementia and those who provide care. Overall, dementia is re-introduced as a human reality embedded in lived experience in this book. It provides foundational knowledge, diverse life narratives and different interpretive frameworks of dementia for all that are in search of in-depth understanding of lived meaning of dementia.

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