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Life Skills: Improve the Quality of Your Life with Metapsychology

Marian K. Volkman

Loving Healing Press (2005)

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Self-help books are abundant, and I have read a good many of them. Marian Volkman's "Life Skills: Improve the Quality of Your Life with Metapsychology" is one of the more practical and useful self-help books in the marketplace. While not a book about metapsychology specifically, "Life Skills" includes several practical applications of it.

Metapsychology is the science that unifies mental and physical experiences to discover the rules that apply to both. In "Life Skills," Marian Volkman teaches us how to apply metapsychology to our experiences, and especially our relationships, so we can live with greater awareness and feel more fulfilled.

"Life Skills" is not designed to resolve one issue for a person but to give practical skills, primarily on how to be more aware of oneself. A major focus of Volkman's book is the emotional scale introduced in the third chapter, taken from the work of Frank Gerbode. I have seen discussions elsewhere of the emotional scale, and I have always thought it a useful tool. Volkman describes the scale much as others have—with different levels of emotions on the bottom such as fear, grief and apathy while the top of the scale includes cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and elation. The purpose of the scale is for people to understand where on the scale is their current emotional state, to understand what that feeling means, and to realize how people react from and to that feeling. Volkman takes us through exercises to help us determine what emotions other people are feeling when we meet them, and she presents basic techniques for us to help that person raise his or her emotional level, as well as making us aware when best not to confront a person based on his or her emotional place on the scale.

Volkman is an advocate of Traumatic Incident Reduction (TIR). She discusses how people need to figure out what things trigger them to experience negative emotions and how TIR can help them overcome their past pain and control their emotions so healing can take place. She provides practical suggestions for how to overcome trauma such as centering oneself in the present rather than focusing on the past traumatic experience.

Much of "Life Skills" is focused on relationships, both with oneself and with other people. Volkman encourages readers to understand the domains in their lives, domains being spheres of influence or groups we belong to, the first domain being oneself, the second being immediate friends and family, the third being groups or acquaintances, and then outward to the greater domains of humanity and the planet. She challenges us to realize the affect we have on others and how we can positively influence each domain in simple and practical ways.



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What I found especially helpful was the book's focus on Awareness enhancers. Volkman begins with the Dalai Lama's statement to "Be kind to each other." She then encourages the reader to be present with other people, to give another person undistracted attention, even if for only a few minutes. Everyone needs attention and affection, and by giving people this attention, it will help heal them and encourage them with needed confidence. Volkman suggests we do the same not only with a friend or family member, but with ourselves, each of us giving himself the attention needed, the love we each deserve. From there, the reader is encouraged to give attention to the workplace, culture, and social groups.

Volkman concludes the book with helpful recommended reading and referrals to websites to learn more about metapsychology, Traumatic Incident Reduction, and additional information on life skills not included in the book.

While reading "Life Skills," I frequently paused and concentrated on the exercises, many of which I had not encountered in other self-help books. Volkman's exercises reflect wisdom and a lifetime of learning and teaching others how to learn about themselves. "Life Skills" is a useful and practical book the reader will return to many times and will want to share with friends. If everyone read this book and practiced its exercises, people would relate better to one another and humanity would achieve the greater potential Volkman believes possible. "Life Skills" is highly recommended to anyone who wants to live a happier, more rewarding life.

- Tyler R. Tichelaar, Ph.D., author of *The Marquette Trilogy*
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