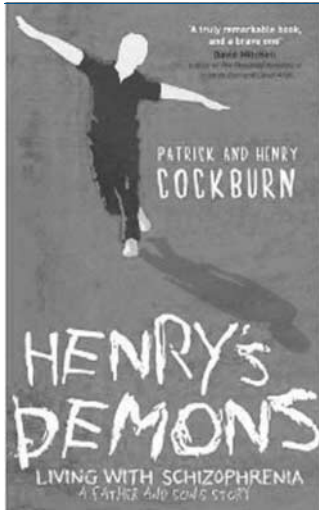


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



**Henry's Demons:
Living with
Schizophrenia,
a Father and Son's Story**

By Patrick and Henry Cockburn.
Simon & Schuster. 2011.
£16.99 (hb). 256pp.
ISBN: 9781439154700

Nine years ago, Patrick Cockburn was reporting from the Middle East as foreign correspondent for a national newspaper. Henry, his charming and talented 19-year-old son, was enjoying his first year at university. On 6 February 2002, while in Kabul, Patrick received a desperate telephone call from his wife Jan. Henry had almost drowned swimming in the freezing Newhaven Estuary. Voices told him to do it.

So marks the onset of Henry's schizophrenia and the beginning of a long and painful journey for Henry, Patrick and their family. Trees and animals speak to Henry, urging him on, instructing him. They tell him to run away, to walk barefoot and naked, pilgrim-like, through the ancient streets of Brighton and Canterbury. Henry is detained under the Mental Health Act and diagnosed with schizophrenia, spending the next 6 years in a variety of psychiatric hospitals. Compelled onwards, he escapes more than 30 times, regularly outwitting staff, even on the most secure wards. Once out, Henry pits himself singularly against the elements. Out of contact, missing for days, the family and staff wait anxiously for his safe return.

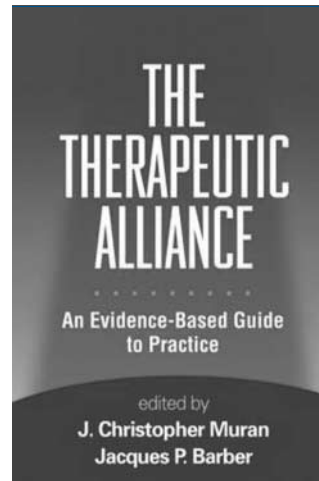
Told through alternating chapters, Henry and Patrick give their own first-person accounts of Henry's illness. The result is a moving and insightful portrait of the devastating effect of schizophrenia on one family. Henry is convinced of the intense spirituality of his experiences, which he recounts in a raw, unflinching prose. With great honesty and integrity, he describes why he does not believe he is ill and why he refuses medication. He tells of the intense terror, his long hours of loneliness and boredom on the ward, the increasing gap between himself and his peers, and his struggle to make sense of it all. It is humbling and heartbreaking to read.

Patrick describes the events as they occur, following the slow unfolding of Henry's schizophrenia and his psychotic breakdowns. He skillfully covers schizophrenia with his clear and sympathetic journalistic prose, and incisively appraises the state of modern psychiatric services and current research advances. Both Patrick and Henry are skilled and gifted writers, but it is the natural understanding between father and son that makes *Henry's Demons* an unforgettable account of schizophrenia. This really is a must-read for anyone involved in treating individuals with

schizophrenia. A stark reminder of the very human cost of this all-too-common illness.

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**The Therapeutic Alliance:
An Evidence-Based Guide
to Practice**

Edited by J. Christopher Muran
& Jacques P. Barber
Guilford Press. 2010.
US\$45.00 (hb). 368pp.
ISBN: 9781606238738

Edited and authored by leading psychotherapy researchers, this book exceeds its aims, and offers readers a comprehensive review of what is known about this important clinical concept. It comprises three sections: a critical summary of empirical studies, discussion of the alliance from different psychotherapeutic perspectives (covering all the major models found in the National Health Service), and reports of alliance training programmes.

First, we are given the origins and descriptions of the concept, and a helpful explanation of the relationship between technique and alliance. Support for and criticism of the alliance concept is well summarised. The validity of the alliance as a predictor of outcome in psychotherapy is critically appraised. The alliance comes out as a pantheoretical concept, intimately linked to but different from the relationship between therapist and patient. This entire section felt like essential reading for anyone practising time-limited psychotherapy.

The second section, covering different theoretical perspectives and guidance, is more of a patchwork. The variation between models in approaches to fostering a good alliance is apparent, but therapeutic sectarianism seems not to be prevalent here. Overall, the most detailed evidence-based practice guidance is to be found in the psychodynamic chapter.

The third section of the book gives fascinating accounts of psychotherapy training studies aimed at maximising the alliance. What comes across most strongly is the challenge for trainee therapists of integrating structured approaches into an effective and personal therapeutic 'style'. One chapter suggests augmenting traditional psychotherapy training (didactic teaching and supervised practice) with simulated therapy in a virtual reality environment, which sounds futuristic (and expensive!). I preferred other chapters which advocate for role-play and video feedback instead. All of these final chapters convey the attention to detail needed in training programmes for a complex skill-set like psychotherapy.

This book is highly technical in the sense that it aims to be evidence-based rather than an opinion piece. The editors have