



reviews

Mann ki Baat

Videotape. By Mental Health Media Production for Northern Birmingham Mental Health Trust 2000. 22 minutes. £24.95–£39.99, various.



Mann ki Baat or “talking about the mind” is the first of a series of productions aiming to address a range of mental health issues relevant to the Asian community. Dharmendra, a Bollywood star, presents the topic in Hindi, supported by English subtitles. The videotape is also available in Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati and Bengali.

The videotape features five ‘real’ users who take the viewer through their very own journeys of mental illness and recovery. A range of aetiological factors, relevant to depression and psychosis, are presented. It conveys positive messages that one should not suffer silently, but approach services and seek help through the pursuit of pharmacological treatments, counselling and informally through prayer and support. Individual and group rehabilitation activities consistent with what may be acceptable to the Asian patient are highlighted. Sadly the presentation loses its balanced approach to treatment when the presenter advocates viewers to take up exercise, yoga, prayer, etc., which he proposes could have a better impact than medication. Depression gets more coverage, with psychosis not receiving as much attention. I couldn’t help thinking that depicting only three users might have allowed the opportunity to develop the themes more comprehensively. The videotape ends with a message of goodwill and blessings, which seemed unnecessary.

The videotape is easy to watch. It is well-presented against a backdrop of

classical dance and music, which is soothing and allows for time to reflect. It can serve as a useful health education tool for potential users and their carers. A range of primary care providers or mental health services could loan copies to families/individuals for viewing. It may also be usefully screened to groups by facilitators to raise awareness and deal with stigma. The videotape may have limited training value for service providers, especially in raising their awareness of the relevance of spiritual contributions to the process of healing.

The accompanying information booklet provides a useful directory of Asian Mental Health Service providers in the UK.

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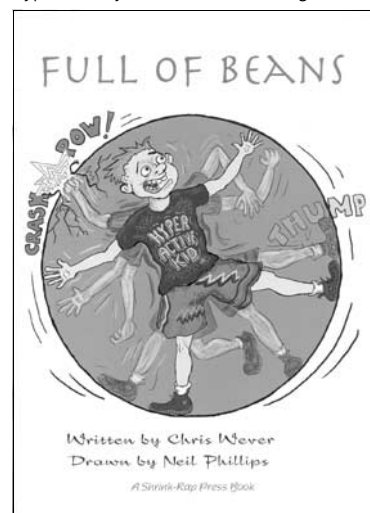
The Shrink Rap Press books

The Secret Problem, The School Wobblies and *Full of Beans*.

By C. Wever. Australia: The Shrink Rap Press. 1999. (Australian)\$15 (pb). ISBNs: 0-646-22063-0, 0-646-22064-0 and 0-9585604-0-4, respectively.

Too Blue: A Book About Depression and *The Panic Book*. By N. Phillips. Australia: The Shrink Rap Press. 1999. (Australian)\$15 (pb). ISBNs: 0-9585604-1-2 and 0-9585604-2-0, respectively.

The Secret Problem, The School Wobblies and *Full of Beans*, written and illustrated by a psychiatrist, aim to explain common mental health problems to children. All three are clear and sympathetic, with judicious use of wry humour and the kinds of drawings commonly seen in children’s literature. *Full of Beans*, for example, clarifies better than a psychiatrist ever could that children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder have strengths as



well as problems and that medication and routine may be a pain, but will help in the end. Both *The Secret Problem* – about obsessive–compulsive disorder – and *The School Wobblies* – about school refusal – use characters that allow the child to externalise and ‘talk back’ to the problem. My co-reviewer, wee Hannah from next door (aged 10), found the drawings “a bit weird” and the *Wobblies* rather scary, but thought the book would help a nervous child get to school. She had some difficulties with understanding the text and we agreed that having an adult read the book aloud might help both parents and children.

Too Blue: A Book About Depression is aimed at adults and features a character called ‘Major Depression’, who can disguise himself as ‘Captain Mania’. Unfortunately, I suspect an adult with an affective disorder might feel patronised. Cartoons can clarify concepts where words fail, but the downside is that we tend to see them as rather light-hearted and superficial. It would take exceptional skill, therefore, to portray depression using cartoons without trivialising in a way people with depression might find insulting. Books such a *MAUS* by Art Spiegelman have shown that cartoons can portray a desolate mood, but *True Blue* fails to achieve this.

The Panic Book, however, works well as a resource for both adults with panic disorders and their families. Panic can be a difficult concept to explain, yet understanding is almost a cure in itself and this book gives a crystal clear description in both words and pictures of a complex process.

On the whole, the informal but clear style of the Shrink Rap Press books will be an excellent resource for sufferers and their families. Pictures speak louder than words.

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