

Therapy games for teens: 150 activities to improve self-esteem, communication, and coping skills

Gruzewski, Kevin. *150 terapeutických her pro dospívající: sebehodnota, komunikace a zvládání náročných situací* | Přeložila Eva Klimentová | Praha: Portál, 2023 | ISBN 978-80-262-2027-5

Reviewed by Magdalena Svozilová

*"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are."
E. E. Cummings*

Adolescence is a very challenging, intense, and fragile period when a person struggles with early experiences and leaves a part of themselves to become an adult and a different person. During this period, individuals' experiences are modified, and many changes occur on multiple levels of life. Teenagers struggle with themes of self-worth, communication, and coping with challenging situations. It is the role of adults to help them along the way and try to guide them sensitively on the journey of growing up. These professionals would greatly appreciate a book that can become a helpful tool.

Kevin Gruzewski offers all adults entering into a teaching or therapeutic relationship with adolescents a book containing 150 therapeutic games that can help them learn about themselves, understand the world around them, communicate their needs, and much more. The author draws on his twenty years of experience as a recreational therapist to create a book that he would have appreciated in the early days of his professional work.

The book is very clearly structured, with 150 activities and games organized thematically into ten chapters: mindfulness, self-esteem, communication skills, stress management, anger management, anxiety, depression, bullying, trauma, and grief. There are 15 techniques associated with each chapter, which are divided into three levels. Level 1 introduces the topic, Level 2 offers a deeper understanding and coping techniques, and Level 3 focuses on building coping strategies. The author primarily relies on the cognitive-behavioural model, and the primary focus of each chapter is

the cognitive processing of the given issue. This is followed by experiential activities where participants are encouraged to share and interact with each other. Discussions are integral to all exercises, integrating and anchoring the lived experience within the technique. These discussions are a crucial component that should not be overlooked. Additionally, the author incorporates activities that utilize relaxation, thematic visualization, visual expression of feelings and emotions, role-playing, and more.

The book's strength lies in its simplicity and highly creative use of these techniques. Often, when someone working with adolescents is unsure of the best approach, this book offers multiple options. It is also structured practically by core themes, allowing it to be used in sections. Keywords can quickly orient the reader to specific topics. Indeed, the suggestions from the book can help educators process challenging topics cognitively and introduce the basic principles of phenomena such as trauma, bullying, depression, and anxiety through recreational therapy. It also provides practical and straightforward guidelines for dealing with anxiety and practising mindfulness. Each activity can be repeated, and one can appreciate the amplification of its impact over time. However, the book's simplicity and clarity also come with potential drawbacks. If used carelessly by novice professionals, some activities may only do no good and bring more struggle. Beyond the techniques, the relationship between the professional and the adolescent is crucial, even though implementation while continuing to educate themselves on specific topics and practical backgrounds underpin each activity. It may be challenging for someone who lacks such experience and theoretical knowledge to navigate the emotions and conflicts, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, that these techniques can provoke. They need to possess the basic skills and abilities to handle the situations that may arise.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all professionals working with adolescents, not limited to just those who work with adolescents. It should be a staple in the libraries of therapists, psychologists, teachers, and educators of adolescents. While the book may appear straightforward, and its use seems easy, I recommend that everyone approaches its application with humility and respect. It's essential to reflect on its implementation while continuing to educate themselves on specific topics, theoretically and practically.

References

- [1] Gruzewski, Kevin. *150 terapeutických her pro dospívající: sebehodnota, komunikace a zvládání náročných situací*. Přeložil Eva Klimentová. Praha: Portál, 2023. ISBN 978-80-262-2027-5.

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