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Book Review

Understanding and Supporting Refugee Children and Young People: A Practical Resource for Teachers, Parents and Carers of Those Exposed to the Trauma of War

Author: Tina Rae

Publisher: Routledge (David Fulton)

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Reviewer: Tristan Middleton

This book by Tina Rae, a prolific author and education & child psychologist, is an accessible resource for adults supporting refugee children and young people. Employing vibrant design and images, the book draws on the skills and knowledge of a wide range of practitioners, trainers and theorists with well-established credentials in the area of supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma.

With an introduction and seven chapters, the book offers a range of information and resources:

Introduction: This sets the current context of post-Covid pandemic and resulting collective trauma, with worrying spikes in the mental health needs of children and young people, an overwhelmed support-services sector and the arrival of thousands of refugee children and young people in the UK. Information is presented about the traumatic impact of war and the impact of exposure to reporting of war in all sorts of media.

Chapter 1: This presents the importance of talking about war with those who have experienced it. It offers approaches for practitioners and additional tips for practice.

Chapter 2: This is focused on understanding trauma and the impact it can have. It also addresses some of the key worries practitioners have about their own skills and capacity to support children and young people who have experience of trauma.

Chapter 3: This presents Tina Rae's Refugee Support Plan for educational settings, where the adult is the nurturer and the school is a central community to support post-traumatic growth. This includes proposals for a range of approaches and offers resources to support the work.

Chapter 4: This focuses on the need for adults to ensure their own wellbeing, with discussion of vicarious trauma and approaches to self-care.

Chapter 5: This focuses on building relationships with refugee parents. A range of 'top tips' are provided for practitioners.

Chapter 6: This offers an extensive range of handouts and activities to use with children and young people.

Chapter 7: This offers handouts and resources to support carers and professionals in their work. A helpful list of organisations and websites are also included.

At a time where the barriers for those who are displaced from their countries are becoming more acute and the needs of learners in this context are becoming more evident to all those involved in education, this book offers a strong combination of discussion about the needs of refugee learners. It is firmly rooted within a theoretical perspective and offers practical discussion and resources to support practitioners.

Written from extensive experience and specialist study this book emanates from the heart. It helps us to remember the fundamental importance of connection and provides enabling tools to adults to positively support children exposed to the trauma of war.

In Tina Rae's own words, this book enables all adults to "develop our own skills and knowledge so we can effectively provide refugee children with a safe space, opportunities for self-regulation and support to process some of their losses in a nurturing relationship" (p.34).

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