

Exploring epilepsy through art and science

The London Brain Project is a public engagement initiative established by an ambitious group of PhD students from the UCL Institute of Child Health. Launched in 2013, the project engages scientists, patients and artists to explore the brain through art.

The project kicked off in November with its first workshop focused on epilepsy. Artists, neuroscientists and neurologists were joined by people with epilepsy and their families to create artwork addressing the question 'What does epilepsy mean to you?'. An exhibition of this artwork went on display to the public at Lumen URC in London, following a launch night on 13 March. The diversity of artwork was a testament to the huge interest in this unique project from the artistic community.



On display were wire sculptures, collages and paintings, all inspired by the experience of living with seizures. Alongside artwork created during the workshop, two new pieces produced by artists were unveiled at the launch event. Julia Vogl transformed a patient's seizure diary into a striking row of colourful screenprinted blocks, each representing a seizure. The colours and patterns correspond to seasons of the year and times of day, a soothingly methodical approach relished by the scientists in attendance. At 20 metres long and spanning several years, the piece is visually and conceptually mesmerising. Dotted along its length are brief notes on the circumstances of the seizure: 'Flight (Melbourne - Shanghai)', 'Watching Downton Abbey Christmas Special', a poignant insight into the unforgiving nature of epilepsy.



Work by Sound Artist Chase Lynn was also unveiled and played at the launch inside a conical meditation room. Chase worked with doctors at Great Ormond Street Hospital to make EEG data from a nocturnal seizure audible, allowing you to 'hear' the brain activity. The result was an increasingly chaotic assembly of hums and buzzes that was both eerie and pleasantly euphonious. A must-listen.

Screened at the launch night was a short film by Piers Bailey, filmed during the workshop at which most of the artwork was produced. The film features interviews with the workshop participants and project directors, and illustrates the personal significance of the project for those involved. By elegantly documenting the unique atmosphere of the workshop, the film demonstrates that the process of creative discussion between scientists, artists and patients is as meaningful as the finished artworks themselves.

Explaining the experience of a seizure is notoriously difficult – like explaining the colour blue to a blind person. Allowing patients to communicate their diverse experiences through art was not only thought-provoking and illuminating, but also incredibly beautiful. Integrating art and science is becoming a more common pursuit by professionals from both camps. Sadly, these attempts are often marred by patronising definitions of 'art' and vague or meaningless scientific themes. It is the utter absence of these common pitfalls that makes the London Brain Project and this exhibition so unique. By focusing on real experiences of misunderstood neurological disorders, the project is reflective and meaningful in a way that is so often lacking in scientific public engagement.



Beyond Seizures
Exhibition
London Brain
Project

| For more information, see www.facebook.com/LondonBrainProject

Reviewed by Rosie Coleman

who is a PhD student in the Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Unit at UCL Institute of Child Health



An intimate experience

Everyday Robots
Damon Albarn

The songs on *Everyday Robots* are finely crafted and personal, marking key moments and transitions in Damon Albarn's life. But the album is not nostalgic; the songs are a form of reflection that comes with middle age, a pause in the process. Their content is intrinsically psychological, recounting events and states associated with, for example, relationships, drug use, and the alienating effects of technology. But far more interesting is the way in which the songs work. Albarn presents us with fragments of images, ideas and emotions very simply rendered, and often mournfully sung. The music uses samples of voices and sounds, sewn together with a melody, and this acts as a current that shifts the pieces, bringing order and an empathic appreciation of what Albarn feels.

Listening to this album is an intimate experience. Albarn is sharing his thinking. At times his allusions bite, at others the listener experiences a perplexed distance from him. It is effortful, as all reflection is, and Albarn's skill is to recognise the disjunction between intentional-level language and lived experience. As Timothy D. Wilson has it, so little of our lives are under conscious control and much of our thinking is an attempt to make sense, to apply narrative and to learn. If we want precision then it is a forlorn task, but Albarn has embraced the phenomenon, given it direction and made it beautiful.

| Parlophone; 2014

Reviewed by Tom Dickens

who is at Middlesex University

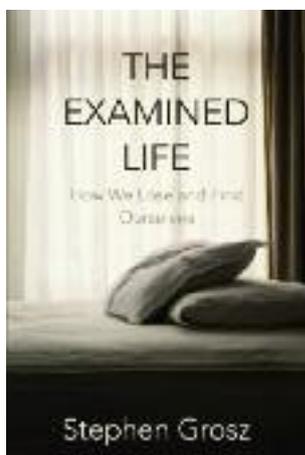
Realities of modern therapy



The Examined Life: How We Lose and Find Ourselves
Stephen Grosz

The result of over 50,000 hours of conversation, this fascinating book charts the journey of both patients and Stephen Grosz himself throughout his career in psychoanalysis. A range of anonymous stories are reported, featuring patients suffering from eating disorders and grief to pathological liars and the chronically boring! Great depth is given into each individual account, with psychological studies and theories lightly included to allow the curious to research topics further. Although individual case studies may follow many years of treatment, they are written in an accessible and concise format.

Of great interest to me were the honest insights into Stephen's everyday experiences as a psychotherapist. Problems such as lacking concentration towards the end of a busy day and the de-stressing value of coffee and internet were all frankly described. Exploration into the author's own family background and life experiences is also provided, giving an insight into his career choice and own personal struggles. This combination of both psychotherapist and patient experiences provides an insightful picture into the realities of modern therapy. The range of patients also ensures that readers will undoubtedly find some advice or insight into their own mental state. The



accounts of two highly stressed PhD students from different backgrounds were of especial relevance to me!

I feel that this book will be of great help to those currently experiencing mental illness who are unsure whether or not to seek help. Psychotherapy is well described here as a partnership between patient and therapist. I hope this overarching sincere message will encourage some readers to take their first steps into therapy.

I devoured this book in less than two days. I have no doubts that many readers of *The Psychologist* will do the same!

I *Vintage*; 2014; *Pb* £8.99
Reviewed by Emma Norris who is a postgraduate student at University College London and Associate Editor for 'Reviews'



Not just another manual

Forensic CBT: A Handbook for Clinical Practice
Raymond Chip Tafrate & Damon Mitchell (Eds.)

The title of this book doesn't really do it justice. Yet another CBT manual you may think. Well you would be wrong! It has chapters on different offender groups, such as adolescents and female offenders, as well as focusing on different offences such as intimate partner violence. Also, importantly, the book combines this approach with looking at CBT in its different formats, for example schema and ACT.

Clearly written by practitioners who know what they are talking about, this book is a refreshing change to just focusing on theory and how the treatment 'should be done' according to certain manuals. The book discusses iatrogenic issues that are often missing in texts not written by practitioners and more helpfully gives in its appendix differing templates of in-session materials that are always welcome.

It is up to date in that it refers to DSM-5 diagnostic criteria and has specific chapters on disorders such as PTSD and personality disorder, dealing with both clinical and criminogenic need, which is often an issue for practitioners working in the field. To be picky it is definitely not a book for students as it is fairly detailed in parts and more practice-focused, so maybe not really suitable as accompanying reading material for academic courses. To be fair to the authors, from the get-go they are clear that this book is for practitioners and not necessarily students; that they stick to being predominantly concerned with applied issues is a refreshing change, making it easy to recommend this book to newly qualified and more experienced practitioner psychologists alike.

I *Wiley Blackwell*; 2013; *Pb* £34.99
Reviewed by Dr Claire Thompson who is a Registered Forensic Psychologist and Senior Lecturer, Nottingham Trent University



Too busy to read this?

Mindfulness for Busy People: Turning Frantic and Frazzled into Calm and Composed
Michael Sinclair & Josie Seydel

You can probably tell from the title that this book aims to prove that just about everyone can practise mindfulness, regardless of how busy you (might think) you are. The first chapter seems to be dedicated to 'selling' the idea to the reader, and convincing them that they should read on and give it a go. However, this does get to a stage of feeling like you want to hurry up and get to the mindfulness practice – we are all busy after all!

I was convinced though, and once fully briefed on what mindfulness will, and importantly, will not do (i.e. quick-fix everything), the authors move into varying aspects of practice. They point

out why, as busy people, we think we do not have time to practise mindfulness, and this in itself can be eye-opening; and that there are common things we do without even realising that can make us believe we are too busy for anything else, like worrying about how busy we are, and that we don't have time... The audio aids online are a great supplement to an already easy-to-use book; so even if you are too busy to read the book, you can practise using the online aids.

I *Pearson Education*; 2013; *Pb* £12.99
Reviewed by Lynsey Mahmood who is a PhD candidate, University of Kent

contribute

Sample titles just in:
Future-Minded: The Psychology of Agency and Control Magda Osman
Inside Children's Minds Valerie Yule
Acts of Consciousness Guy Saunders
The Power of Others Michael Bond

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Remember, 'Reviews' now covers much more than books. Get in touch on jon.sutton@bps.org.uk or follow us on Twitter @psychmag for opportunities to contribute.



Attracting an audience

Beautiful People Live in Beautiful Homes
Robert Burriss (podcast)

Hosted by Dr Robert Burriss, the monthly Psychology of Attractiveness Podcast provides a 15-minute overview of the latest in sexual attraction research. Taking an evolutionary perspective, this edition explored how sexual attractiveness changes over time according to the environment.

Firstly, Burriss describes research from Dr Steven Arnocky at Nipissing University, Canada, finding that men and women report themselves to be 50 per cent more competitive when primed to believe partners were scarce. This suggests emotions around sexual conflict may be transient depending on external situations.

Next, Burriss explains new research asking if someone can be made more attractive by placing them in more desirable surroundings. Research from Dr Michael Dunn at Cardiff Metropolitan University developed two sets of images of the same male or female in either a regular or luxury apartment setting. Females rated the same man 33 per cent more attractive in luxury surroundings, whereas there was no significant difference in male ratings. Thankfully, female shopping stereotypes were avoided in the discussion! Instead consideration was given to the evolutionary basis of women's preference, seeking a male with more material benefits as a wiser investment in child-rearing.

Finally, do younger fathers have better looking kids? Research by Dr Susanne Huber at University of Vienna explored this using data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. Cohort participants had been rated for attractiveness in a previous study and Dr Huber additionally analysed age of parents at birth. Younger fathers were found to have more attractive offspring, with evolutionary functions in fewer sperm mutations at younger ages discussed.

Burriss is an extremely likeable host, providing an overview of findings in an accessible manner to a broad audience. Some critique of the research presented would be welcome, probably lacking due to the wide intended audience. This podcast is a prime example of public engagement and academic promotion via the internet. Although this was my first listen to the long-running podcast (since 2009), I will definitely be making it a part of my monthly listening schedule!

See <http://psychologyofattractivenesspodcast.blogspot.co.uk>
Reviewed by Emma Norris who is a postgraduate student at University College London and Associate Editor for 'Reviews'

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

See www.thepsychologist.org.uk for this month's web-only reviews



Self-testing mental health

My Mind Checker
Channel 4 website

This interactive site has been launched to coincide with the latest live series of *Embarrassing Bodies*. Using a range of validated tests, users can self-test themselves for eight mental health conditions including ADHD, Autism Depression and OCD.

A clear disclaimer is provided stating that these tests are for informative and not diagnostic purposes. Results are accompanied by somewhat detailed descriptions of your assessment: all reminding concerned participants to contact their GP.

As well as examining your own tendencies and habits, you are also provided with interesting comparisons against other users. For example, after completing Baron-Cohen's Autism Quotient, I was informed that engineers are currently

displaying the most autistic traits and teachers the least.

Whilst I am wary of mental health being branded under 'Embarrassing Bodies', surely any opportunity for users to take time out to consider their mental health is beneficial. At the time of writing, over one and a half million tests have been taken. Clearly this site is reaching a vast audience and producing data that many psychologists would love to analyse. It is vital that these outputs are adequately assessed to allow in-depth follow-up results in the future.

See www.channel4.com/mymindchecker

Reviewed by Emma Norris who is a postgraduate student at University College London and Associate Editor for 'Reviews'

Taking evolutionary psychology to the West End – a personal reflection



Lance Workman reflects on his appearance in a live show and podcast with comedian Richard Herring (while fellow psychologist and partner Sandie Taylor provides a slightly different version of events)

Lance: Over the last 20 years I have made numerous appearances in the media, but when I was invited onto Richard Herring's 'The Meaning of Life' comedy show my heart leapt. Finally a chance to combine evolutionary psychology with humour!

Following his piece in the April 2013 issue of *The Psychologist*, Richard had been in touch with our editor, who had recommended me. The offer was a promise of a 'fun time with RH followed by drinks and a cheque'. I packed my bags and headed off to the

Leicester Square Theatre.

'The Meaning of Life' consists of a series of shows where Richard looks at a major theme each month and, following a one-hour stand-up routine and a refreshment break, engages in a 30-minute discussion with a celebrity/expert. For one show he wanted an evolutionary psychologist who was 'game for a laugh' to explain to him and the audience why we have evolved the propensity to be good or bad.

So how did it go? Following a very humorous first hour (involving Richard

A myth explored



The Myth of the Untroubled Therapist: Private Life, Professional Practice.
Marie Adams



Marie Adams has written an excellent book of interest to all who work as therapists, raising sensitive, even uncomfortable issues. From an experience of having a professional complaint made against her (which was later dropped), the author went on to question the role of issues in the personal lives of therapists and their impact in therapeutic practice with 40 therapists for her doctoral research, resulting in this book.

The chapters helpfully examine a broad range of issues that can befall therapists in their personal lives. The topics addressed include therapists' experience of depression, physical illness and family problems, including separation. I was very moved and impressed by the author's humanity, courage and directness, and her not sparing of herself or her experience in an effort to bring these issues to a broader audience.

The most helpful idea is the acknowledgement that we all have our own issues in what draws us into careers as therapists, and in our personal lives as therapists, and that these issues can either potentially enrich or obstruct our therapeutic work. The book explodes the myth of the untroubled therapist and is essential reading for therapists at any stage in their career.

| Routledge; 2014; Pb £19.99

Reviewed by Dr Paul Gaffney who is a Senior Clinical Psychologist, Assessment, Consultation & Therapy Service, TUSLA, Ireland



Uncompromising

Nebraska
Alexander Payne (Director)

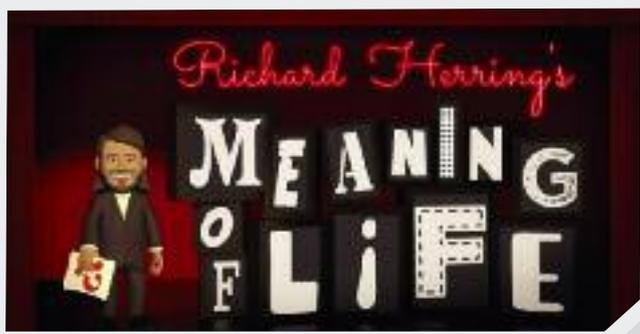
Nebraska is a blackly humorous and unsentimental film about old age and family relationships. An old man stumbles along the side of a busy highway. Woody (Bruce Dern) is frail, and seems confused. He wants to walk hundreds of miles to Lincoln, Nebraska to collect \$1 million winnings promised in a letter. Both disconcerted and inspired by his father's uncharacteristic determination, his son David (Will Forte) decides to drive them there. David's ulterior motive is a final attempt to get close to his taciturn, alcoholic father; and maybe incipient dementia is not the only explanation for Woody's behaviour.

Dern gives an uncompromising performance, more than

matched by June Squibb's as his long-suffering and acerbic wife Kate. At times the monochrome cinematography is stark, but beautiful. It serves to remind us that where families are concerned, nothing is ever really black and white.

| Reviewed by Kate Johnstone

who is a postgraduate student at University College London



simulating sex with a doughnut and dismantling the Ten Commandments), I was wheeled out to do my bit with Richard. I managed to bring in a lot of evolutionary psychology whilst engaging in a number of gags. The audience (around 2000), having been warmed up and suitably 'refreshed' at the bar, were up for all of this, laughing at the appropriate places and looking sufficiently interested as I explained reciprocal altruism,

kin selection and coalitional affiliation in the ancient past. As the 3000-strong crowd cheered and applauded at the end I felt really quite pleased with how the evening had gone. Oh, and I think I managed to slip in a mention of my new book *Evolutionary Psychology* (with Will Reader). On the train journey home I happily reminisced with my partner Sandie on how well the evening had gone...

Sandie: As Lance's partner for the last 20 years I have had to endure his obsession with evolutionary psychology and his constant stream of gags. So when he was offered the opportunity to appear in a West End comedy show where he was encouraged to do both – my heart sank. Knowing that I would be expected to go along to show support, I steeled myself for the ordeal. They had wanted an expert or a celebrity – but having failed to locate either – they made do with Lance instead. The Leicester Square Theatre was considerably smaller than I had expected and the audience was around 200. Before the show Richard explained to Lance that he wanted a good mix of psychology and humour and that Lance could do any gags that came to mind during their double act. Lance grinned and rubbed his hands in anticipation. I smiled weakly.

Following a very funny (and more than a little irreverent) stand-up by Richard, I was amazed by how much the audience put away at the bar in the interval. Then the moment arrived. The curtain was raised and Richard came out to introduce Lance to much applause. They both held microphones and engaged in conversation where Lance did his usual 'evolutionary psychology explains everything' spiel interspersed with gags and shameless repeated plugs of his book. The audience appeared to find his gags funny (they don't have to live with him) and at the end of the evening they engaged in good-natured applause. Overall a successful evening, but of course Lance was unbearable on the long train journey home.

| To download the podcast, see www.comedy.co.uk/podcasts/richard_herring_meaning_of_life



Standing committees?

Are You Sitting Comfortably?
BBC Radio 4

Coinciding with a national government consultation into physical activity in the UK, this 30-minute radio documentary explored new research into the dangers of sedentary behaviour. Presenter Chris Bowlby interviewed various researchers and advocates of active lifestyles in both work and the home, setting himself the challenge of giving up sitting at his desk for Lent. A general overview into the range of epidemiological and experimental evidence supporting the effects of sedentary behaviour on cardiovascular health, diabetes and lifespan was presented.

Via case studies, including Chris himself, the perceived pros and cons of a more active work lifestyle were explored. Psychological barriers such as social norms were frequently expressed; for example, not wanting to appear odd by using a standing desk in front of peers. Potential office costs were also stated as a barrier, however this needn't be so. Integrating stair climbing and standing breaks into working lives are free ideas to boost activity. Experienced benefits were plentiful, such as improving and changing working relationships by holding walking meetings. These can change the typical balance of power experienced in chaired meetings

towards more equal, functional exchanges.

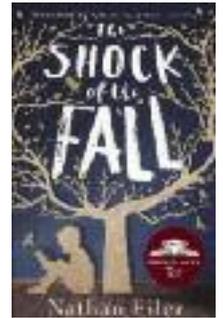
Brief interviews included Professor Alexei Marmot at UCL, a leader at the university's new Centre for Behaviour Change. Unfortunately, despite having a behaviour change expert on the show, no real discussion was channelled on how best to change sedentary lifestyles. Research into changing sedentary behaviour would undoubtedly require another episode in itself. However, an overarching message of this programme was that sitting is a conscious decision. Choose to sit less and integrate more activity into your lifestyle, and you will feel the benefits. Being more conscious about our sitting behaviour and knowledgeable about the risks that regular, prolonged sitting can have to our health are useful starting points. If attention is given to this issue by a large scale of individuals, changes in work and social perceptions will hopefully follow. So, are you sitting comfortably? Hopefully less so after this programme!

I Reviewed by Emma Norris
who is a postgraduate student at University College London and Associate Editor for 'Reviews'



Beautifully poignant

The Shock of the Fall
Nathan Filer



The Shock of the Fall follows 19-year-old Matthew, a schizophrenic, as he struggles to come to terms with the death of his big brother. The reader is given access into Matthew's world through his 'writing therapy' as he goes back 10 years to the day his brother Simon died. Despite learning of Simon's death early on in the book and finding that Matthew blames himself, the suspense is expertly built as to how this happened and whether Matthew had any involvement. Through Matthew's eyes, the reader sees the impact of the aftermath ('the shock of the fall') on him and his family, beautifully capturing the ripple effect of grief throughout the family when a child is lost.

In the present, Matthew is receiving care for his schizophrenia. His account of his experience in the psychiatric ward is laced with dark humour, which serves to further endear the reader to Matthew and provides a poignant image of institutionalisation: 'I live a Cut & Paste kind of life'. Matthew mocks the psychiatric jargon used ('Patient is engaged in writing behaviour' 'I draw pictures too. Is that drawing behaviour?') and highlights his frustrations with the staff who can't relate to him ('Steve made that little clicking noise with his tongue, and winked at me, as if to show that he was on my side or something. Except you're not on my side, are you Steve?').

Full of issues of interest to psychologists, this book tackles grief and loss; child care-givers; and mental health conditions, institutions and treatment. Nathan Filer, a registered mental health nurse, has skilfully drawn on his experiences to create believable and loveable characters.

I must admit to being disappointed at how quickly I read this book; I would like to have spent more time with the characters. However, this easy-reading book does not lack substance, and will reach a large audience. The focus of the book is timely with current mental health awareness campaigns (e.g. www.time-to-change.org.uk), and offers a compassionate view of a mental illness that has historically been demonised.

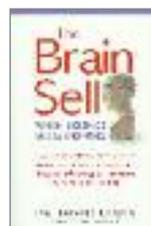
This is a beautifully poignant book, written with sympathy and sensitivity, well deserving of its Costa Book of the Year award.

I HarperCollins; 2013; Pb £7.99
Reviewed by Caroline Flurey
who is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of the West of England



Programmed to buy

The Brain Sell: When Science Meets Shopping
David Lewis



David Lewis, a Chartered Psychologist in neuroscience, has spent 30 years investigating the human brain and how it can be influenced, for both research and commercial purposes. He wrote this book to increase awareness for the consumer of the different strategies utilised in marketing and advertising that encourage us to buy.

Lewis writes in a flowing, very readable style, providing research studies and interviews from commerce and academia. The book would suit students and researchers in marketing, advertising and psychology, and, equally, the general reader.

Lewis describes methods used in neuroscience to monitor our behaviour and emotions and how these are applied in the commercial world, covering the 'science' behind selling, hidden persuaders that influence how we shop, atmospherics (e.g. lighting,

music played in shops), and brand 'priming'. He writes in a somewhat impartial manner until the chapter discussing the influence of television. Here Lewis describes TV as 'an all-pervasive and powerful medium of persuasion' leading us to believe that true happiness is gained only by 'continual acquisition and consumption'.

He discusses the 'Big Data' collected about us from information we provide online, in social media, mobile phones and even Kindle usage. This data can be used to develop marketing strategies targeting our subconscious brain to encourage us to buy more. However, Lewis also provides a brief outline of how we can protect ourselves against such data collection and the persuasive power of advertising.

I read this book with mixed feelings, ranging from fascination to



Unanswered questions...

The Island
Channel 4

The Island centres on 13 men stranded on a remote Pacific island with only basic equipment, a day's supply of water, and each other. The premise of the show, orchestrated by leading survivalist Bear Grylls, is to uncover whether man has lost the evolutionary ability to survive in difficult situations due to the influx of technology in recent years.

While the initial idea is not particularly different to its predecessors, such as *Shipwrecked* or America's *Survivor*, what sets *The Island* apart is the complete lack of any noticeable assistance from trained professionals; even the camera footage is pioneered by the castaways themselves. While this gives viewers a rare opportunity to gain a reasonably undistorted account of how relationships are formed and bonds are made in the most bizarre, and often dangerous, of situations, there were aspects of episode one that couldn't help but leave you wanting more. A majority of the air time in the first hour was spent showing the viewer the different struggles the men faced with the very basics of survival, such

as lighting a fire. Very little air time was given to how leadership roles were formed, and whether they were as a result of a democracy or an alpha male asserting his dominance. Footage such as this might have given the episode the depth it seemed to be lacking.

Ultimately, the cast knew their time on the island wasn't going to spiral into a reconstruction of *Lord of the*



Flies, and at any time they could leave, so whether constructed reality shows like *The Island* will ever fully capture the extent to which these modern men retain a primal instinct to survive still remains unanswered, though it is definitely worth watching the remainder of the series to see how the cast develop.

I Reviewed by Alice Hobbins
who is at the University of Worcester

feeling almost nauseous and quietly smouldering. As the author presents it, in the commercial world we are automated all-consuming robots, not human beings. It may make you want to give up TV and social media, or instead just be more wary when shopping and online. With a wry smile I did note two things whilst reading. First, given the topic of the book, both websites provided for his work and further reading are incorrect; and second, the scrap of paper I absentmindedly used as a bookmark happened to be a 'clubcard' voucher from that ubiquitous supermarket. Ah, the all-pervading power and presence of advertising.

I Nicholas Brealey; 2013; Pb £14.99

Reviewed by Kate Sparks who is a self-employed Chartered Psychologist

...Would we survive?

Dr Howard Fine, who acted as consultant psychologist on *The Island*, 'reviews' his own involvement. A full version of this piece is available online at www.thepsychologist.org.uk.

Aside from making for a voyeuristic experience for the viewers, this programme offers a unique opportunity to showcase an almost laboratory environment to observe survival through adversity – with the exception that the castaways could choose to withdraw, and were somewhat safe in the knowledge that they will be 'saved' from this challenging environment after 28 days of captivity.

As a clinical psychologist with an interest in post-traumatic stress disorder and resilience, I was tasked with offering psychological screening for the potential castaways prior to being deployed into such a hostile environment. This included screening interviews, mental health reviews and personality profiling to consider the robustness of the individuals and risk management. Further support involved monitoring of adaptation or failure to adapt to the hostile environment at the individual level, and identifying individual behaviours that support adaptation or that were counterproductive to support adaptation, as well as being on-call to offer direct support should this be required. On the return from the island, opportunities for debriefing and reverse cultural shock were also offered. Prior to being involved in this project, I was grateful to be able to consult with Professor John Leach, a SERE psychologist (survival, evasion, resistance & extraction), who shared his expertise and guidance on survival psychology [see also his article for *The Psychologist*, tinyurl.com/leachjan11].

The group who applied for the project were self-selecting and quite heterogeneous. This diversity could be seen as equating to a survival scenario (shipwreck or airline crash), with a broad spectrum of individuals, with their only commonality being the drive to get from A to B, to survive from day 1 to 28. Whilst not your typical reality television characters, the Islanders most generally were considered to be relatively robust and open to new challenges (a positive resilience trait), hence their motivation to apply in the first place.

Observing this group of castaways over the series may offer a further view of the psychodynamic survival pattern of behaviour following a disaster incident, pre-impact, impact, recoil and adaptation. We may further examine how personalities change in order to try and meet social expectation, goals, or social roles required to survive. Within the survival scenario, the Islanders may adapt to fit with the social norm, and may take on stronger traits in order to survive. Similarly, as the days pass, the group will be adapting to their situation and environment, and the group dynamic will evolve to help meet these needs, and work together to tackle any challenges and problem-solve. In order to achieve this, the group will be expected to progress through Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development, Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing. Based on the size of the group, it may be able to function without requiring any formal organisation, hierarchy, or specific alpha male or group leader. The extreme environmental conditions and organic group may challenge such expectations of group development. We may therefore have an opportunity to identify the unfolding psychological phases of behavioural adaptation and survival, at an individual and group level.

Should this social experiment be replicated or re-commissioned, it would be fascinating to take on an experimental design, profiling longitudinal changes consequent upon individual experiences. Reflecting on our own academic and professional knowledge and experience, would we be able to psychologically resource ourselves to adapt and remain resilient? Would we be able to influence the dynamic on the island to enable a group to perform? Ultimately, would we survive?



The dizzy heights of psychology in the media

Vertigo Roadtrip
BBC One

Dramatic, vibrant and fast-paced, *Vertigo Roadtrip* aired in May. It provided a whirlwind tour of height phobia, treatment with exposure therapy, and some of the world's most stunning vertiginous locations.

The programme profiled five of the UK's most severe acrophobics – sufferers of an irrational and extreme fear of heights. Lee, Jodie, Louise, Glenn and Pauline are among the 3.5 million people in the UK suffering from this condition.

Clinical psychologist Dr Jennifer Wild and presenter Mel Giedroyc take the initially sceptical group from meltdowns 12 metres up a staircase to enjoying the view from a terrace on the 152nd floor of the world's tallest building. It is a convincing and astounding demonstration of the potential for therapy to be transformative.

Rather than the baby steps we might typically associate with graded exposure therapy, this brave bunch took leaps, in Lee's case literally: Dr Wild asks Lee to confront his worst fear, diving boards, head on. Initially horrified and upset, after reasoning and encouragement he faces the

board and creates a splash with great success.

Louise's compelling journey showed the link between early traumatic experiences and the development of phobias. We see her conquer her 'nemesis', bridges, after years of avoiding them after her brother terrorised her in the middle of the Clifton suspension bridge when she was just nine years old.

Dr Wild calmly and persistently encourages the group to try ever-greater heights. She told me: 'I was keen that the group learned that they were in no real danger whether they were on a staircase or travelling up a mountain in a cable car. I thought if they could conquer the Burj Khalifa, then this would give them the confidence to visit the top floor of any other building.' This seems ambitious, but with every success the viewers' doubt drops along with the phobics' anxiety.

Coping strategies like viewpoint, corrective information-seeking and distraction are touched upon. The more typically slow and gradual process of exposure therapy would admittedly not have

made such good viewing, but I would like to have seen more of the work that Dr Wild carried out with the group. Her proficiency in changing unhelpful thoughts seemed, at times, magical, and perhaps needed more explanation. For example, no explanation was given for her encouraging the group to do jumping jacks. I followed this up with her and she said: 'To change the group's beliefs about falling over when their legs felt wobbly, I had them jump up and down. The aim was to show that even when their legs felt their weakest, they were strong and steady enough to jump up and down.'

Vertigo Roadtrip is an engaging and valuable education for the general public about the nature of anxiety disorders such as specific phobias. It is sure to help to reduce stigma, inspire hope, and encourage people to seek evidence-based treatments, the best possible outcome of psychology in the media.

I Reviewed by *Petrina Cox, a Research Psychologist at the Oxford Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma, University of Oxford*

Postgraduate Psychology at UCLan

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