

BOOK REVIEWS

ONWARD: CULTIVATING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IN EDUCATORS

Aguilar, E. (2018). San Francisco, 372 pages.
ISBN: 978-1-119-36489-4-53495

"*Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*" (Aguilar, 2018) is an inspiring book for any educator who is struggling with challenges, not only professionally but also personally. The author, Elena Aguilar, writes this book with a personal note and personal experience in each of the 12 chapters of this book. The essential word in this book is "resilience." Resilience in teachers is key for creating quality classrooms and schools. The opportunity for becoming resilient originates in how an educator makes sense of irritants, interruptions, and unexpected events, because interpretations dictate actions. By cultivating resilience, teachers can fulfill the intentions that brought them into the teaching profession.

Onward is a practical resource for cultivating resilience in educators and is based on the author's research on emotional resilience, psychology, systems thinking, and change management as well as 10 years of testing in schools and offices. This book outlines a conceptual framework with four parts: who we are, where we are, what we do, and how we are. The book identifies 12 habits and dispositions that can be cultivated in order to build resilience. Each habit correlates to a chapter and to each month of the year. The book also offers strategies and implications for leaders to practice with the school staff.

The book starts with a resilience manifesto, which is a public declaration of principles and intentions. I found principle six the most fascinating,

which states that "to help children build their emotional intelligence and resilience, we must simultaneously tend to our emotional intelligence and resilience" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 19). The first three chapters offer foundational approaches for building resilience and should be read in order. After that, you can jump to any chapter that best fits your habit and disposition. The first chapter is about knowing yourself and being purposeful. When you know yourself, you gain clarity on your purpose, emotions, core values, and personality. The second chapter is about understanding your emotions, accepting them and having strategies to respond to them. The third chapter deals with telling empowering stories. How you interpret stories can make a difference in building emotional resilience. According to the author being optimistic is a key trait of resilient people.

As a K-12 educator and member of my school leadership team, I found chapter four the most interesting. It is about how building community and empathy are pivotal elements in creating strong, healthy communities. All leaders should develop, articulate, implement, and be stewards of a shared vision of learning. They also should collaborate with students, families, and staff to achieve a shared vision of the school. Chapters six through eight address how to boost our resilience by learning how to be in the present moment, without judgment and finding humor in each situation. They also explain how to cultivate compassion for ourselves, as well as for others, as a way to help us deal with interpersonal challenges. The author describes how resilient people have positive self-perceptions and take care of themselves by exerting physical self-care and well-being. Aguilar focuses on honing the bright spots such as our

strengths, assets, and skills and consequently by doing so, boosting our levels of self-efficacy. The result is that we become empowered to influence our surroundings.

Subsequent chapters address seeing challenges as opportunities for learning through empowering our curiosity, which is a valuable way to overcome obstacles and find solutions. These chapters celebrate and appreciate individual and collective successes by practicing gratitude and trust. Aguilar states how creativity and play are good resources for creating resilience in educators and for fueling our courage. These assets make us more resourceful, and expand our connections with ourselves, and others. The author sees change as an opportunity to fuel our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energies. Patience, perseverance, and courage boost our resilience as educators and can help us manage change. I totally agree with Aguilar that when we

show appreciation and gratitude for others, it cultivates trust in ourselves and builds our resilience.

Onward is a practical guide for educators and leaders who wish to build resilience in themselves and in their organization. It offers invaluable scientifically based resources on how to boost the resilience of coaches, mentees, and school staff. This book also comes with an accompanying workbook designed as a curriculum supplement for professional development for a school staff or a central office team. Additionally, the chapter reflection sections are very useful for immediate application in fueling resilience in yourself and your organization. Overall, I think the author offers an indispensable guide and curriculum of hope for anyone involved in education who wants to cultivate trust, empathy, community, resilience, and compassionate schools.

Guillermo Iglesias Fernandez

Rodríguez Fernández, J. R. (2018). *El análisis político del discurso. Apropiaciones en educación*. Barcelona: Octaedro. 175 páginas. ISBN: 978-84-17219-84-0

This book remind us something important to keep in mind for those who dedicate ourselves professionally to educational *praxis*. This question is the recognition of the political nature of education as an inherent characteristic of it, despite the usual efforts to present education as a “neutral” or merely “technical” issue. With the intention of deepening this central idea, the author relies on a concrete methodological tool, the Political Analysis of Speech (PAS), whose historical review and practical exemplification will lead us to rethink the pillars of some epistemological approaches in social sciences and humanities, as well as to question some instrumentalization of the socioeducational professions within the framework of the neoliberal structures and relational forms characteristic of our days.

The first part of the book takes us to the linguistic turn experienced by the social sciences and humanities during the 20th century. Taking a tour of the contributions of various authors, we move from a conception of language as a representation of ideas to another position that recognizes the performative nature of language and places it, therefore, as a social practice that creates and recreates social realities and identities; understanding, of course, that “it is an evolution that should not be taken linearly or gradually” (p.33). On the other hand, it can be understood as a philosophical dialogue between paradigms, as

reflected in the postmodern critique of the foundations of modern thought that the author also develops in this first part. A postmodern criticism from social commitment, which will necessarily entail revisiting certain key concepts such as: *discourse, power, ideology* and *emancipation*, among others.

These terms, loaded with different meanings and nuances, will be retaken by the author in the second part of the book, which will respond directly to the subtitle of the work: “*appropriations in education*”. Here the differences between the Critical Studies of Discourse (CSD), closer to the basis of critical thinking and originally developed by Teun A. van Dijk, are contrasted to the proposal from the PAS, which is closer to the post-critical approaches, whose main references are Foucault, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, among a broader list of authorships. From this second perspective, it is committed to a complex thought to recognize, among other things, that there is no moral nature immanent to the human being, nor a linear path towards emancipation; as well as that the power is a relational matter and, therefore, it can adopt different forms, many of them subtle and diffuse, from where to produce frames of thought and *rituals of truth*.

It is also recognized that linguistic and extra-linguistic intermingle in a single discursive action, while at the same time claiming the understanding of ideology as a suture, rather than as a false conscience, thus understanding that people try to sew the various fragments together. of the realities perceived from our ideological positions, in an attempt to provide intelligibility to the world

we inhabit. But far from ruling out critical studies in favor of post-critics, the author ends up warning that “the struggle for a more just and egalitarian society is such an extremely complex task that requires different approaches and multiple procedures” (p. 95).

And paying attention, precisely, to the possible PAS procedures, the author warns that “the broad methodological framework offered by discourse theory has given rise (...) to a certain relegation of methodological issues to the background” (p. 100). Consequently, the work ends with an example on how APD can be developed in the educational field, assuming that each context and researcher will involve a particular methodological sensitivity and strategy. This example, truly illustrative, is a case study of training courses for people benefiting from minimum insertion income. Through an orderly synthesis of what this ethnographic approach was, we are shown how triangulation between the APD with other techniques such as

participant observation and in-depth interviews, allowed the researcher to know and understand the decisions that the various agents involved took in this context through three dimensions of analysis: the technique (what is done?), the theoretical (why is it done?) and the metatheoretical (what is it done for?). The answers to these questions are glimpsed in the recognition of a pedagogy of the paternalistic cohort deficit that, while offering opportunities for the profitability of poverty, keeps the ‘poor’ entertained. Hard criticism, as we see, to a certain socio-educational intervention that challenges us directly and – perhaps this is the most important thing – invites us to dislocate certain discourses to explore educational possibilities that are more honest and committed to the generation of other social conditions for all.

Alberto Izquierdo-Montero
Departamento MIDE I, UNED

Prince T. (2019). *Mindfulness exercises for the class. 100 practical ideas*. Madrid: Narcea

This book is both, innovative and traditional. It is traditional because it recovers and activates a series of ideas and processes that were forgotten by the cognitivists and academicism. It is also innovative because it adapts and focuses those ideas and dynamics in accurate exercises for the classroom.

Mindfulness, (generally translated to Spanish as ‘atención plena’ o ‘plena consciencia’), is it a fashion? Is it a conceptual trend? Perhaps, as the analysis conducted by Ronald Purser suggests, it is a market manoeuvre disguised under the ruse of a new spirituality, focused on living in the present moment regardless of past or future. Is it a simple word to emphasize traditional processes such as concentration, meditation orientated to the self-conscience, emotional education, integral education, etc., that were abandoned for years? Is it a psychotherapeutic and educative resource needed in order to regain the internal balance and drive away dysfunctions and other vital issues (stress, existential dissatisfaction, anxiety, pain, sickness...) acquired due to the speed of events happening in the current world? A speed that forces people to change their life into some accelerated existential race in which we feel immersed in permanent competition.

Whatever the answer to these questions, and notwithstanding the naivety of those who defend mindfulness as a revolution, that is going to save

the world from a catastrophe, it is true that currently there is a need for ways and tools to not be dragged down by over-information that appears as fast as it disappears. This tormenting and dizzying peculiarity of the current world is generating situations that affect the normal development of infancy, producing stress, anxiety, emotional tantrums or attention deficit between others that affect not only the infancy, but also the rest of the population.

Those practicing mindfulness have reported improvements to their wellbeing because it supports the development of positive socialization processes that help people to be, instead of to have. These processes are necessary in order to activate in each of us, skills to defend ourselves from the thoughtlessness associated to the stressing race of having more, without considering how or when. In summary, when faced with this ‘Kleenex’ culture of using and throwing away knowledge, information, relationships, stuff, etc., practicing mindfulness offers ideas and tools to not be drawn into this tide. This is because it helps us to observe and use by ourselves our internal potential and the present experience. It also helps us to transform the external elements in positive energy that is valuable for the personal processes of humanizing self-realization and to act being aware of every single day.

The book introduces us to 100 exercises of mindfulness for use in the classroom. These exercises are structured into ten chapters that include: breathing, guided meditation, active meditation,

gratefulness, yoga, emotional intelligence, mindful colours and scrawl, calming down and relaxing, mindful walking and mindfulness for teachers.

How can I use the book? To be able to answer that question, it is important to consider the title of the book: 100 practical ideas. The mindfulness exercises developed in the book are focused and directly applicable while there are a source of ideas and processes than allow users to adapt it to other situations. Not in vain, at the end of each exercise there are two sections: a) Practical tips (b) further ideas.

The learners, the education professionals and teachers, the parents and anyone who is willing to learn the ideas, dynamics and strategies of mindfulness, will find this book a valuable and multivalent material. This works for both active learning and for emotional issue management. Using this book only as a vademecum would be a mistake, as the practical ideas of each exercise are as useful

as the exercise itself. This is why the book has a double value:

- a) *practical*: it develops specific exercises applicable in the classroom.
- b) *theoretical/practical*: extracts and adapts ideas and strategies of each exercise towards new situations of self-observation, knowledge, experimentation and calm control of oneself. This allows us to know and control ourselves and therefore the environment instead of it being the environment that controls us.

There are many voices that denounce the lack of educational content in the school, as it has been kidnapped by the dominant academicism exteriorized in endless curricula. This book takes one step towards offering tools of personal development that can be integrated in the school day.

José V. Merino Fernández

Marrasé, J. M. (2019). *La educación invisible: Inspirar, sorprender, emocionar, motivar*. Narcea Ediciones.

La educación invisible. Inspirar, sorprender, emocionar, motivar is a book that invites us to reflect on the need to revitalize our classrooms through the deepest and most authentic sense of education: to train good people who are responsible and creative. According to the author, José Manuel Marrasé, has a degree in Chemical Sciences from the University of Barcelona and a PhD in Sociology and Political Sciences from the Pontifical University of Salamanca, director and professor at the present time of the Hamelin Laie International School, located in Montgat, Barcelona, Spain, defends that the qualities and abilities of future generations depend fundamentally on values, behaviors and habits. Thus, it raises the need to generate an ideal environment that allows students to feel protagonists of their own personal growth. For this, he considers that the role of an inspired teaching staff is crucial, which, together with the support of families, manages to impregnate meaningful learning classrooms through inspiration, observation, listening, communication, motivation, persistence ...

Throughout 20 chapters divided into three blocks, the author defends and defines the invisible issues that he believes should guide our action

in the classroom. In the backbone of his proposal highlights his efforts to boost optimism in the classroom. "We need, more than ever, a deep humanism, which makes a desirable future possible; and education is the artisan who can slowly shape this future" (p.13). In order to inspire new proactive and optimistic attitudes, he urges teachers to leave permanent curiosity as a mark through sensitivity and assertiveness.

The conclusion is clear, teaching is an emotional work and teachers are the key piece, so it emphasizes the importance of addressing the need to encourage, boost and accompany the student in their full individual and social development. In this way, it is essential that teachers review their fundamental values and beliefs, carrying out a constructive and reflective criticism, in which the meaning of a holistic education is resumed through respect, freedom, creativity and solidarity.

Books like this represent for educational world professionals a reflection of the interest and need for reflection and improvement of teaching practice, inviting the reader to rediscover again the immense abilities to know and communicate, thus retaking elementary issues such as the management of emotions, passion, integrity and ethics.

Alicia Murciano Hueso
Universidad de Salamanca

**MENTORSHIP OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH.
PRACTICAL GUIDE****Dolan, P. y Brady, B. (2019). Madrid: Narcea. 152
páginas. ISBN: 978-84-277-2086-2**

This work written by Pat Dolan and Bernadine Brady aims to provide a practical guide to all those people who work with children and young people, it is a useful tool for social workers, people in juvenile centres and shelters, as well as workers in community development, social educators and teachers.

Dolan and Brady analyse mentorship as a relationship of friendship between a young person and an older person, where there was no previously existing link. This relationship, between the adult and child, should be maintained at least for a year in which periodical meetings will be carried out. In this way, this friendship should be beneficial for the child, making the adult a support figure for the mentored child or youth helping them to prevent future difficulties.

Following the lineal argument made in the book, the authors defend that mentorship programmes should make an emphasis on children support with the purpose of achieving that they develop as well as possible before adversities in life, contributing positively in their social and emotional development.

This practical guide is made up of six sections; the first being an introductory chapter, followed by another five that look at mentorship from different perspectives, presenting at the end a chapter dedicated to final considerations. In the introduction of the work the reader is provided with different definitions, typologies, inconveniences and advantages of mentorship to youth. The authors also show the foundation, need and importance of mentorship programmes.

In the following chapter the concept of social support is examined, looking into how this aspect can play a relevant role in the life development of both in children and in the very contexts of mentorship programmes. Together with the analysis of different support networks and their definitions, the authors include social help and support sources, types (concrete, emotional, through advice, esteem) and their qualities (importance, quality). In the second chapter, with a more descriptive

character, Dolan and Brady provide the reader with a practical idea of how to facilitate that a young person can evaluate their support network with the objective of understanding how that network is working for them, because of this the authors describe and explain the use of two key evaluation tools of social support (Social Network Questionnaire -SNQ- y Social Provisions Scale -SPS-).

In the third chapter a general vision of different types of practices associated with efficient mentorship programmes is offered, examining aspects linked to programme design and to fundamental practices that accompany some of the mentorship programmes that stand out to because of their good practices. Other points are also covered such as; characteristics of mentors and mentorees, the mentoring relationships linked to better results, as well as the possible challenges and problems of mentoring and suggestions as to how to face them.

In the next chapter two types of mentorship in a school context are covered: mentorship between classmates of a different age and mentorship of adults in the school, highlighting in both cases the advantages, challenges and inconveniences that could arise in the development of them. In relation to the fifth chapter, it focuses on examining different collectives of children with which mentorship was carried out: children with mental health difficulties, with delinquent behaviour or with problems with courts, those staying at children homes, young asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants, youth with disabilities and intergenerational mentoring. Throughout this chapter the reader can find the basic principles of these mentorships as well as a series of examples of cases that can be applied to other contexts involving children.

This book concludes with a section of final considerations in which the most relevant aspects of previous chapters are presented, highlighting as a conclusion three aspects: the importance of informal social support, the role of investigation into mentorship of youth and the importance of these programmes for early prevention and intervention; analysing mentorship from a perspective based on rights.

Barbara M. Gutiérrez
Universidad de Salamanca

