

## B O O K R E V I E W

## *Compassionate Healing of Sex Addicts: and Those Who Love Them*

By John Lentz

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Reviewed by

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John Lentz's years in prison ministry and the plethora of cases he's experienced has given him a gift of insight. His work with a hard to reach, underserved population facilitated his use of cases to illustrate clinical impressions and strategies. Lentz shares his understandings through short, readable books. *Compassionate Healing* is his seventh book, and like his others it's written in a conversational style that leaves readers with a sense of witness to the healing process. Lessons are expressed as compelling narratives through individual stories and illuminate shifts in thinking, as those with whom Lentz speaks open up to consider alternate life possibilities.

Speaking in a strong but gentle voice that conveys acceptance and compassion, Lentz gives readers a feeling of "listening in" on healing conversations between chaplain and inmate. His approach is intensely personal, yet simultaneously respectful of the "arms-length" distance prisoners often require. Personal privacy and space is neither breached nor threatened, while Lentz demonstrates a skill of evoking desire for change from within. Subtle movements of unburdening difficult experiences or thoughts develop into opportunities for inmates to leave a troublesome lifestyle behind, and the door then opens for them to become better people.

The logical, sequential stories come across as friendly conversations, but the impact of the narratives goes well beyond. Self-acceptance, self-responsibility, and even self-direction are revealed as the women with whom Lentz works begin to explore future di-

rections. Fostering self-respect, Lentz's work nurtures the willingness to self-start, to self-monitor, and to move beyond life circumstances over which many inmates feel little choice or sense of control. A change in attitudes and behaviors begins to evolve and find its own momentum. With changing perspectives, immobility that entraps individuals can be released, sometimes altering the course of their life. Freedom through the relief of burdens is tangible in its own way.

Lentz comments on his own techniques in neuro-linguistic programming to facilitate connections with clients. While his style of working is more directive than that of Carl Rogers, his ability to show unconditional positive regard brings Rogers to mind. Yet, it is another mentor whose Lentz's work provides testimony. In analyzing Lentz's ability to evoke change, readers with clinical backgrounds in addictions will recognize an underlying paradigm shift from traditional approaches to one that is lenient, yet paradoxically closely reigned in. The influence of Milton Erickson is evident in Lentz's direction of clients to inner resources and self-evaluation of automatic trance states--a central element of self-awareness. The addict, as well as the enabler, are entrusted with discovering and accepting themselves, recognizing the iterative elements of compulsive behaviors, and finding their own path to extricate themselves from embedded patterns.

Written in a refreshing, straightforward style that is as effective for the readers as well as those with whom he works, Lentz states that the brevity of this work is intentional to ensure it is more accessible. He explains presenting difficult materials by creating a quick, easy read, enhances the probability that clinicians will pick up the work, and retain sufficient information to make a change in the way they look at, or work with, difficult cases. The artistic eloquence of Lentz's style is expressed clearly and succinctly in his own words (p111):

"Amplify your strengths and watch yourself change.

Amplify other's strengths and watch your world change"