Health and Happiness for Intelligent People

By Dr. John D. Lentz

Edited by Michael David Medley

Reviewed by Roxanna Erickson Klein

John Lentz has addressed the double bind, a tool that can be used as a powerful vehicle for progress or to impede progress. Double binds are a form of communication one encounters in every day life, they are a habitual skill that one learns and can be engaged intentionally and strategically, or without conscious awareness of the process. Known among psychological professionals for the negative ways that they interfere with self perceptions and choices, Lentz takes a broader look and addresses the positive ways that this tool can be used to support healthy changes and lifestyles..

Lentz carefully describes the notion of double binds using terms that are equally understandable to the general readers as well as the professional audience.
Starting with an analogy in which King Arthur found himself with "No other option... (than to agree to a challenge), Lentz uses this entertaining tale to introduce the reader to the complex binds that individuals throughout history have found themselves caught in. They are constructed when words, phrases and ideas are presented in a manner that only seems to offer a "best choice" or best response. The rhetorical answer to the challenge of King Arthur turns attention inward, which reflects the evolving message of the book in a style not unlike two mirrors facing each other.

The ideas and illustrative stories contained within this work are a series of ever tightening lessons about the nature of communication and choice. Ideas are introduced in everyday language and annotated with examples from Lentz's own life experience. They lead the reader from an explanation of how the illusion of choice presents within everyday interactions stimulates a response within our own frame of reference.

Lentz's clarifications of what constitutes a positive or negative double bind, how they are used, and how they can be used is at once an easy read and full of illuminating concepts. Clear explanations of "double binds" and their common usage changes the context in which the reader then becomes attuned to the ways the listener, or recipient of a challenge, then becomes empowered or immobilized through the limitations of their own perspectives.

Underlying concepts, brought to life with examples, become opportunities to self evaluate ones own styles of communication, both internal and external. This book offers
information that invites habitual interpersonal interactions and internal evaluation alike to be put into service toward intentions.

The structure of this book gives a platform of growing appreciation for concepts and patterns that are part of our everyday lives. Whether the reader is naive about "everyday trance" or new to the notion, Lentz's succinct style of explaining with a tone of patience wisdom is a pleasure to read. The style and tone of Lentz's writing guides reader through a series of building blocks that introduce, support and offer a path of constructive use.

The descriptions bring to mind ones own recollections of interactions filled with uncertainty and discord that create discord when the intention seems to be harmony. The anecdotes, examples and tales echo life around us all, and show direction for how to use the material effectively and therapeutically.

John Lentz's talent for making the complex simple and for expressing things with the wisdom of a master, is once again shown in this book. He has tackled a complex subject, about which too little is written, and made is appear so relevant that one wonders how it has been neglected for so long. By bringing the notion of a "positive double bind" forward, Lentz has reframed possibilities in a strategic way, with Ericksonian precision.

This succinct book describes in 18 chapters what takes many individuals a lifetime to appreciate. Expressed in terms that are simple yet deep, and address some of the most complex interactions that take place within and between human beings.
Bringing these ideas into our own awareness, Lentz has given us a gift of offering ways to examine difficult communications and opportunities to improve communications in a multitude of ways.