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Treating Anxiety Conditions Choosing a Self-Help Book

Choosing a self-help book as a therapeutic tool or as an accompaniment to therapy is a difficult task. There are thousands of books for sale and each one claims to be better than the next. Unfortunately, what makes the task more difficult is that the selection of a book is a very personal process, just like choosing a book or movie for entertainment purposes. As a result, it makes it difficult to recommend books to individuals, as everyone's preferences are different.

When choosing a self-help book, consider the following factors:

1. What are the author's credentials? Is the author considered an expert on the topic he or she has written about? Does he or she have academic and professional qualifications related to anxiety? Does the author have professional experience in dealing with anxiety?
2. What does the book claim to do? Books that claim to "cure" a variety of different conditions in a short period time should generally be treated with scepticism. In general, books that address specific issues (e.g., phobias, social anxiety disorders) rather than all topics related to anxiety are found to be most useful.
3. What theoretical orientation is the book based on (e.g., cognitive-behaviour therapy)? You are likely to follow-through with the program in a book if you have similar beliefs about what causes and anxiety and how to go about reducing its symptoms. If you strongly disagree with the author's perspective, you are unlikely to find the book useful.
4. What is the focus of the content? Does the book focus on explaining the causes of anxiety, describing anxiety conditions, or outlining strategies to overcome symptoms of anxiety? Depending on your goal, you may be looking for a book with a stronger focus on understanding anxiety or a book that focuses equally on understanding and treating anxiety. Look through the table of contents to determine what topics the author focuses on. If you are looking for books online, many major retailers now allow you to view the first few pages of the book, which includes the table of contents (www.amazon.ca , www.chapters.ca).
5. What do others think of the book? Although choosing a self-help book is an individual process, ask a store clerk, check online book reviews, or ask others with your condition what they thought of the book. If you can learn more about specific features that individuals liked or disliked, it may help make your decision easier.
6. What does the author base his or her method on? Does the author quote only his or her own research? Does the author use research published in well-known journals? Check the bibliography or reference list in the back of the book. Are there are a variety of sources used? Are the reference materials recent or out of date?