



Subversive Dialogues: Theory In Feminist Therapy

Laura S. Brown

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Feminist therapy is more than a prescription of technique; it is a unique philosophy of psychotherapy. While much has been written on feminism and therapy, this bold book breaks new ground by making explicit and coherent the theoretical underpinnings of feminist therapy. Building on the revolutionary work of feminist scholars who have described how women employ strategies of knowing the world in a manner distinct from men, Laura S. Brown, noted for her pioneering work in the field of ethics and boundaries, shows how these insights should reshape the very nature of the therapeutic encounter. Therapy must be understood as an opportunity to help clients see the relationships between their behavior and the patriarchal society in which we are all embedded. Viewed in this light, feminist therapy affords both practitioner and client a chance to subvert the system in which women's lives have been devalued. With meticulous care, the author examines key features of the therapeutic encounter with a feminist lens: the power of the therapist; assessment and diagnosis; the nature of change; the ethics of practice; and differences in race, class, and sexual identity. She constructs a vision of therapy that helps the client develop a sense of entitlement to satisfying and equal relationships outside the therapist's office. She proposes that clients need help finding their "mother tongue" and retelling their story in a language freed from the patriarchal notions that have shaped and limited their experience. Her vision of therapy considers the dilemmas faced by feminist therapists who must work within a mental health system that is inherently sexist and use its flawed or problematic tools for testing and treatment. This powerful vision of feminist therapy is grounded throughout with case examples that illustrate how a dialogue between therapist and client can be healing, subversive, and transformative all at once.

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