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BOOK Review by Dr Philippa Aveyard

Beat the Booze –A Comprehensive Guide to Combating Drink Problems in All Walks of Life. By Edmund Tirbutt and Helen Tirbutt. Harriman House Ltd, 3A Penns Road, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 2EW. £9.99. 197 (main text) + 82 (appendices) + 8 (index) pgs. ISBN 978-1-905641-42-0

The two authors of *Beat the Booze* write from personal experience of addressing problem drinking, which ranges from a serious history of drinking to excess, to a background of what may be considered normal social drinking.

Their honesty and openness in revealing and explaining their own histories sets the tone in which the book is written.

I assumed the book to be a "self-help" guide, targeting a narrowly defined audience of those at a point of accepting and addressing their own problems with alcohol. It becomes immediately apparent that this is not the case.

The book is widely applicable and informative – for those with an academic or professional interest in the area of alcohol addiction, for problem drinkers at any stage in the process of addressing their drinking, and to carers, families, and employers affected by or interested in these issues.

The layout of the text and writing style lends to the guide's accessibility and readability. The writers use repetition to cement striking and important points and use highlighted quotations scattered through the text to act as reminders. The quotations are well chosen, often emotive and, as a result, inspirational. Chapters each have summaries, in bullet point format, serving as further opportunity for reiteration. Although thorough, the chapters are not overloaded with information.

There are frequent descriptions of case histories, written from honest personal perspectives. These highlight a range of scenarios, demonstrating that the experience of an alcohol problem is individual, and giving a broad variety of examples to which the reader may relate. They educate by example and by motivational influence, creating a non-confrontational style. The text is however clearly directive where required, notably in descriptions of medical emergency situations where it is recognized that these are beyond the scope of the book, and simple clear and appropriate advice is given. The sense that the writers have the humility to accept their limitations is comforting.

Part 1 of the book, "Helping yourself," allows the reader to begin developing the image of a situation where drinking alcohol is no longer a problem. It focuses on the future and making positive changes towards this goal whilst

fully exploring the extensive range of damaging health and social impacts in which continued harmful alcohol use may result. The motivational, solution-focused approach maintains optimism, avoids confrontation, and empowers the reader to make a change. Popular myths and worries about taking the initial steps to addressing problem drinking and the processes involved in managing it are dispelled. The concept of abstinence as a favourable aim is gently introduced, whilst respecting that this may not be everyone's choice or a necessity for all. It takes a practical, step-wise approach to supporting the reader in engaging with help, exploring a full range of options in a non-discriminatory, non-judgmental manner. Confidence is built and success is shown to be attainable.

Part 2, "Helping others," discusses the challenges that people face in addressing problem drinking with colleagues, employees, or loved ones. It motivates and encourages boldness in raising concerns. Practical examples in the form of role play are used to demonstrate how to approach issues sensitively and productively. Information about a full range of supports and options for management available is given and the reader is assisted in identifying personally appropriate supports by the use of checklists. Although aimed towards those who are attempting to help others with drinking problems, the style of this section would also serve to be useful for those with awareness of their own problems with drinking, prompting them to view their own challenges from a different perspective. The issue of drinking in the workforce is given specific attention, with useful information about developing and implementing alcohol policy, and practical advice for addressing concerns about problem drinking within the workforce. It is realistic but de-stigmatizing and expresses optimism about the capacity for those in recovery to be good workers.

The thorough appendices are an excellent resource in their own right. The inclusion of additional detail outside the main body of the text permits an uncluttered read. They include a section on more detailed medical information, statistics about the effects and impact of alcohol consumption, and an extensive list of sources of help, with brief descriptions of their remit and useful contact details.

In conclusion, this is an informative and accessible text with a wide target audience. The style is informal without being patronizing. It is easily readable, but it is thorough and retains factual accuracy. It is frank, but does not scaremonger. It tends towards a solution-focused, motivational approach to inject optimism and confidence, empowering people to take control. I would thoroughly recommend it to my patients and their carers.

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