

ForeWord Reviews

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

Creating a Healthy Life and Marriage: A Holistic Approach: Body, Mind, Emotions and Spirit

Judith Anne Desjardins

Spirit House Publishing

Hardcover \$28.95 (400pp)

978-0-9843875-0-2

The night before her wedding, Judith Desjardins sits alone in her room, sick with dread. She is stilled by the consuming fear that she's going to get it all wrong, all over again. She's been married and divorced twice already and even though *this* time it feels right, she can't ignore the nugget of fear and doubt that tells her something is wrong.

Something *is* wrong. Like many couples, Desjardins and her husband are ill-prepared for the onslaught of post-honeymoon marital issues which, if ignored, insidiously eat away at the fibers of a marriage. But more than this, as an individual, Desjardins is deeply flawed. If she yearns for a healthy marriage, she must first learn to heal herself. It is with this spirit of self-examination and healing that Desjardins offers readers *Creating A Healthy Life and Marriage*, an all-encompassing guide to fostering healthy, happy relationships.

Divided into eight sections, this book takes readers through a step-by-step process of internal transformation. Placing great emphasis on the importance of the individual's relationship with one's self, Desjardins guides readers through a provoking examination of childhood relationships. Using the term "Inner Child" to describe the "authentic self," readers analyze unmet emotional and psychological needs rooted in the formative years of their development. This assessment of the inner child forms the basis of Desjardins' theory of holistic healing: because "body, mind, emotions, and spirit" work in synthesis to produce healthy individuals, and by extension, a healthy marriage, a reader must

confront and recognize the wants and needs of his or her inner child and in doing so, recognize the deficiencies in his or her own character.

Each chapter builds on the skills honed in the previous section, with active exercises assigned for each major emotional investigation. These “homework assignments” are thoroughly constructed and move beyond superficial self-help jargon. Though the litany of self-help questionnaires is both visually and psychologically exhausting, the questionnaires pose probing, often uncomfortable, but necessary questions about family history and personal traits. The book is not meant to be a quick, browse-at-random self-help manual. There are expectations placed on the reader—he or she is required to be an active participant in his or her own healing.

One of the major strengths of this book is the inclusion of excerpts from the creative work of Desjardins’ own therapy clients. As a licensed clinical social worker and a practitioner of holistic psychotherapy, Desjardins’ use of creative writing and art therapy is exemplified through the work of her clients and gives readers a realistic sense of how the process of transformation unfolds in real lives.

A comprehensive and interactive guide for building lasting relationships, *Creating a Healthy Life and Marriage* will appeal to readers both married and single wishing to invest serious time and effort into the journey of self-healing and improvement. (June 2010) *Shoilee Khan*

Review date: September 2010.