



Personality, Social and
Biological Perspectives on

PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

BEM P. ALLEN

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Western Illinois University



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Preface

As recently as the 1960s, psychology and other social sciences had relatively little in the way of a *technology*—effective, practical methods by which people could deal with psychological problems. As we enter the 1990s, the psychological sciences have matured. I am convinced that psychology and its kindred disciplines have accumulated information and developed methods that people can use to make their lives less stressful and more joyful and meaningful. Accordingly, this book presents current information that students can use to enhance and enrich their lives.

Basic Assumption Underlying *Personal Adjustment*

This text assumes that people can solve many of their own problems if they have the required information and have mastered the required skills. This is no quick-fix self-help manual—students are told that change is sometimes very difficult. Rather, *Personal Adjustment* constantly communicates an affirmative message: “No one is in a better position to know you well than you; for that reason, the best person to solve many of your problems is you.”

Audience for *Personal Adjustment*

The principal audience for *Personal Adjustment* is freshman and sophomore students at two-year and four-year colleges and universities. It is designed to be the principal text for courses in which students are taught facts and techniques that can be applied to solving typical personal problems.

- For personal adjustment courses taught in psychology departments this text is of course an ideal fit.
For psychology departments that offer two-semester courses in introductory psychology—often experimental psychology in the first semester and clinical/social/personality in the second—*Personal Adjustment* is an excellent text for the second segment.
- *Personal Adjustment* is also highly appropriate for courses in education, counseling, social science, and health science with a personal, social-development focus.

How This Book Is Organized

Personal Adjustment has five parts, the first of which introduces a number of concepts discussed in the remaining section and also explains the personality/social/biological perspective from which all subsequent topics are approached.

- Part Two: Adjustment and the Individual is devoted to succeeding in college and getting to know oneself. A comprehensive chapter on major personality theorists and the application of their theories to personal adjustment is included.
- Part Three: Adjustment and Other People consists of three chapters concerned with forming and maintaining fruitful close relations with others. Friendship, the expression of sexuality, and love and marriage are addressed in terms of research-supported methods by which people can function more effectively in these situations.
- Part Four: Adjustment and Social Problems deals with beliefs, modes of thinking, and behaviors that generate problems in relating to others or are detrimental to the individual's psychological or physical well-being. Anger and aggression, prejudice and discrimination, and faulty beliefs that come under the general heading of human foibles are covered in this part of the book.
- Part Five: Ordinary and Extraordinary Adjustment Problems first addresses difficulties that anyone is likely to encounter, with special emphasis on stress and anxiety and strategies for coping. A final chapter describes abnormal behaviors and their treatment in a manner intended to promote better understanding of these problems.

Special Features: Learning Aids

- **Focus questions** at the beginning of each chapter arouse interest in the topic and suggest perspectives from which to approach the material.
- Each chapter begins with an **introductory vignette** that personifies the themes and situations covered in the chapter.
- Numerous **boxes**, many containing self-administered scales or quizzes, relate text material to life experiences. By using the *self-test boxes*, students can gain insight

dimensions as anxiousness, assertiveness, stress level, and locus of control. *Case studies* and *narrative boxes* provide examples of how topics in the text occur in real life or how techniques described in the text might be applied to everyday situations.

- The text presents concrete, readily mastered **techniques for life enhancement and problem solving**, including asserting oneself, dealing with loneliness, protecting the self-concept, understanding and preventing depression, studying and preparing for tests, and beginning and maintaining an exercise program.
- Given the high level of interest of many topics—attested by several student reviewers—students may wish to further pursue them; interesting, lively **readings** are listed at the end of each major section.
- **Key concepts** and terms are boldfaced when introduced and defined and are also boldfaced in the index for easy referral not only to the definition but to the accompanying discussion—an advantage over the usual glossary. Key concepts are also listed at the conclusion of each chapter.
- **Review questions** at the end of the chapter draw students beyond the material by asking them to solve problems or imagine circumstances that are implied but not directly covered by the text. A student who has answered these questions will have a personal, highly useful mastery of the material that goes beyond mere recitation of facts.
- **Summary points** conclude each chapter to provide a brief overview of the significant concepts and theories presented.
- **Example multiple choice questions** at the end of each chapter offer students a further opportunity to review material as well as an opportunity to practice answering questions like those in the test bank.

These special features together are the equivalent of a built-in *study guide*.

Special Features: Comprehensiveness

In teaching, I prefer a comprehensive text—one that contains all the topics typically taught in a given course. *Personal Adjustment* is constructed to allow instructors to mix and match not only chapters but parts of chapters. Although all the chapters are interrelated, each is comprehensible as an independent unit.

Special Features: Themes

A major theme of *Personal Adjustment*, and one that is being increasingly emphasized in college classrooms as we enter the 1990s, is **critical thinking**. Students are encouraged throughout the text not merely to memorize but to analyze and evaluate.

The underlying philosophies of this book, **self-empowerment** and **self-responsibility**, are also among its strongest themes. Students are reminded that doing well in school (Chapter 2), making a good impression (Chapter 3), and coping with death (Chapter 4), with loneliness (Chapter 12), or with stress (Chapter 13) are things that individuals can learn to do for themselves with the help of scientifically based techniques.

The concept of **health psychology** and the interrelatedness of mind and body is another major theme. This theme is especially emphasized in Part Five, but it is also found in the chapter on anger and aggression (Chapter 9) and the chapter on minimizing the effects of human foibles (Chapter 11).

Self-directness in the area of **social relations** is also stressed. This text assumes that people often shape the beginnings of their social relationships and have much to say about how these relationships develop. This theme is addressed in terms of making and keeping friends (Chapter 6), establishing humane, pleasurable, safe sexual relationships (Chapter 7), and choosing wisely in marriage (Chapter 8). Social relationships are also paramount in the discussions of controlling anger (Chapter 9), freeing oneself of the many forms of bigotry (Chapter 10), and understanding the special problems of people suffering from severe psychological abnormalities (Chapter 15).

Ancillaries

The **multiple-choice test bank** provided with *Personal Adjustment* contains at least 40 items for each chapter—many of them classroom tested. Assuming that the 15 chapters are divided into five units for testing purposes, over 200 items are available for each test. Test items are also available in a computer file that permits selection and printing of exactly the desired items.

The many **exercises** in *Personal Adjustment* have been used to stimulate vigorous classroom discussions. Students may be asked to complete self-evaluation exercises and to compare their responses to the norms included in the text. The significance of scores at the extreme ends of the scales provides additional material for class discussion. The anecdotes and case histories as well as the chapter opening vignettes have also proved to be productive in stimulating discussion.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks are due Claire Verduin, Managing Editor of Brooks/Cole. Claire's many creative ideas greatly enhanced this text. The encouraging comments and light psychotherapy she provided kept me going when the going was tough. It is great to have an editor who is also a friend.

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A Special Note to Students

This course is different from most of your courses—almost all the material in it is directly related to problems, situations, and events that have happened, are happening, or will happen in your life. Going to classes, studying, and reading supplementary materials often seems like a job you have to do for some future benefit. But you can think of going to this class and reading this text as an adventure in improving your life. You will learn about topics as immediate as the evening news:

- Why do people marry the people they do?
- Can you score better on tests by being less anxious about them?
- Is cancer . . . or AIDS . . . the risk you think it is?
- Why do men rape?
- Can happy events be stressful?

You will also learn techniques for coping with everyday challenges—studying, finding friends, finding and keeping a mate, coping with stress. Where other courses emphasize career preparation and general culture, this one can affect how you live your life now.

In this class, too, you are likely to find that your professor is interested not only in what you are learning but in you as a person. You can bring personal concerns to class and find advice and help. And you can learn to help yourself through the text, the class discussions, the readings, and the many learning aids provided to make the material interesting and even fun.

Features That Will Help You Learn

- **Focus questions** at the beginning of each chapter will spark your interest in the topic and suggest perspectives from which to approach it.
- An **introductory vignette** personifies the themes and situations covered in each chapter.

- Numerous **boxes**, many containing self-administered scales or quizzes, relate text material to your life. You can use the self-tests to gain insight into your personality and problems by rating yourself on such dimensions as anxiousness, assertiveness, outgoingness, and control of what happens to your self-concept. Case studies and narrative boxes provide examples of how topics in the text occur in real life or how techniques described in the text might be applied to everyday situations.
- The text presents concrete, readily mastered **techniques for life enhancement and problem solving**, including asserting yourself, dealing with rejection, promoting happiness, studying and preparing for tests, losing weight permanently and beginning and maintaining an exercise program.
- Students who have read earlier versions of this text say the topics are so interesting they want to know more about them. At the end of each section you will find descriptions of lively **readings** from which you can learn more.
- **Key concepts** and terms are boldfaced when introduced and defined and are also boldfaced in the index for easy referral not only to the definition but to the accompanying discussion—an advantage over the usual glossary. Key concepts are also listed at the conclusion of each chapter.
- **Review questions** at the end of the chapter draw you beyond the material by asking you to solve problems or imagine circumstances that are implied but not directly covered by the text. Once you have answered these questions, you will have a personal, highly useful mastery of the material that goes beyond mere recitation of facts.
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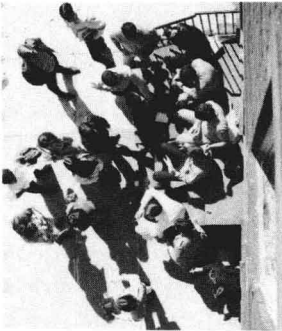
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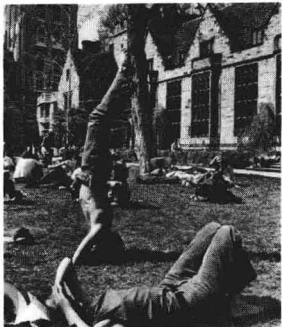
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