

Book Reviews

Improving the Odds (The Remarriage Gamble - a Woman's Guide)

By Averill Richardson. Auckland: Collins, 180 pp, \$NZ 24.95; Release date: November 1994.

This book is very aptly titled, considering the sobering success rate of second marriages. However, it amply fulfills its promise by addressing a wide range of issues that arise as such a relationship evolves, and by providing a positive but realistic approach to dealing with them. Throughout, the book is presented from a woman's perspective, supported by the author's personal experience, thus providing a powerful and validating resource for its primary readership of women going through the process of remarrying.

The structure of Part I of the book itself is developmental - tracing through the process of establishing and consolidating an intimate second relationship. At each point, it provides a frank, immediate and personal discussion of the issues which are faced. Ms. Richardson does so in a fresh, uncomplicated and uniquely New Zealand style. For example, chapter headings include "Surveying the Field", "Placing your Bet", "Clearing the Hurdles", "The Home Straight", and "Collecting the Dividend". Sections in each chapter are similarly direct and personal. For example, in chapter 2 on "Selecting a Winner" she includes such headings as "Cupid's Arrow or Fatal Attraction", "Sex - Your Place or Mine", and "Do we Have what it Takes?". The second part of the book is devoted to "Troubleshooting", with twenty sections dealing with issues ranging from "Age Gaps" through "Grief" to "Violence". It concludes with an overview of where to go in the community for help.

The book is written in the same way that the reader is invited to behave - openly and frankly, with values of caring and mutual respect, and emphasis on much discussion and a cautious

approach to matters of the heart. Ms. Richardson is not hesitant in proffering advice and guidance, but does so in a manner which is practical and affirming.

I see two limitations to this book. In the first place, the values and skills propounded are likely to be so alien to the experience and culture of some readers, that they will have real difficulty in capitalising on its resources without some form of help. In the second place, Ms. Richardson fails to acknowledge the varied sources on which the authority of this book is based, including the considerable professional literature from which she clearly draws.

In similar vein, it would have helped for her to cite some of the resources that readers might access in following up on the issues raised under Troubleshooting.

In all, however, this book is immensely affirming and informative for women who are involved in the "Remarriage Game" - offering them a plethora of practical, well-founded pointers.

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Counseling Men

By Philip L. Culbertson.
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994,
96pp, \$NZ 34.95.

This book is notable because of the timeliness of its contents, and because the author is Director of Pastoral Studies, College of St. John the Evangelist in Auckland. Its purpose is to "...open the way for men to discuss and discover their fears and losses with clergy, pastoral counselors, and lay caregivers." (back cover of book).

It commences with a discussion of gender-specific listening skills, common resistances, and specific process tasks for clergy involved in counselling men. This is followed by a consideration of major themes faced by males in the church, including their ego, the phenomenon of shame, and their fears. Then Culbertson

devotes separate chapters to issues associated with employment (or its lack) and retirement; with being parented and parenting; with marriage and communication; and with love and friendship needs. The book concludes with a chapter on masculine spirituality.

In this slender volume Culbertson has packed a great deal of universally valuable information, drawing on therapeutic and research literature, on Western cultural history, and on his own experience as a pastoral counsellor. While illustrations and references are North American, they are very relevant to New Zealanders as Culbertson describes problems created by conservative, stereotypical male attitudes and behaviours. Because of this emphasis, however, the book should not be seen to speak on behalf of all men in all circumstances.

Culbertson addresses church-based pastoral caregivers as his primary audience, and has frequent suggestions for them. At the same time the book's challenge to male stereotypes, its holistic/spiritual perspective, and its constant reference to counselling implications are of great value to secular counsellors and to members of the general public. Commendably, it offers alternative perspectives and constructive action suggestion throughout.

This is not a facile do-it-yourself manual, nor an integrated training programme for counsellors. It is an articulate and tightly-packed overview of the traditional male stereotype and the challenge that it poses to pastoral caregivers and counsellors. As such, it speaks directly to many of the issues that exercise us in New Zealand today.

Johannes Everts, *Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Auckland.*