



Every Day Gets a Little Closer: A Twice-Told Therapy

Irvin D. Yalom , Ginny Elkin

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The many thousands of readers of the best-selling *Love's Executioner* will welcome this paperback edition of an earlier work by Dr. Irvin Yalom, written with Ginny Elkin, a pseudonymous patient whom he treated—the first book to share the dual reflections of psychiatrist and patient. Ginny Elkin was a troubled young and talented writer whom the psychiatric world had labeled as "schizoid." After trying a variety of therapies, she entered into private treatment with Dr. Irvin Yalom at Stanford University. As part of their work together, they agreed to write separate journals of each of their sessions. *Every Day Gets a Little Closer* is the product of that arrangement, in which they alternately relate their descriptions and feelings about their therapeutic relationship.

Every Day Gets a Little Closer: A Twice-Told Therapy Details

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Mengran Xu says

A therapeutic relationship

The relationship between a therapist and a patient is the most delicate but also the most unusual one. The patient is expected to be completely honest and willing to expose their innermost secrets and vulnerability to the therapist. On the other hand, the therapist remains distal and objective, who offers the uttermost care while maintaining clear boundaries. While the patient sees one therapist and the therapist perhaps matters a lot to them, the therapist sees many patients and compartmentalizes their time and mental resources. It is a strange relationship—the therapist knows the patient so well that perhaps no one else understands the patient better than the therapist, while the patient knows almost nothing about the therapist, and yet, a therapeutic relationship could not and should not become friendship.

To make this relationship even more complicated, the therapist is paid by the patient, either directly (private practice) or indirectly (public healthcare). Therefore, the therapist is the service provider and the patient is the customer. However, unlike other customer relationships, the feedback channel is absent here. The therapist does not know (in most cases) how the patient likes or dislikes therapy—because it would be a very awkward conversation. In fact, we therapists never know if our patients like us or not, if our patients find therapy useful or not, if we are giving them what they need or not, we can only make educated guess.

In-between sessions, I often wonder if my patients ever think of me and I also find myself thinking of them a lot—not just remembering what happened in the last session and preparing for the upcoming one, but appreciating who they are and reflecting on what they said. There is a part of me who applauds this caring, but another part of me worries that I might be over-invested in this therapeutic relationship, which might render my ability to help my patients and compromise my own well-being.

Sometimes I wonder what matters in therapy—is it my skills and tactics, or my caring? What do my patients appreciate—is it my doing or being? We therapists pride ourselves for our training and clinical experience, for example, the number of patients that we have helped, the toolbox that we have developed over the years, and our past success. But is it true?

I remember one patient who said the following to me. It was after a very fruitful and empowering session and she had started making incredible changes. She said, “I like this non-biased, non-judgmental relationship,” and added, “everyone should go for therapy”. She clearly did not applaud my skills. In fact, I tried many of the skills that are supposed to work but did not. In my opinion, it was when I expressed my concerns about her daughter and processed our relationship openly (to show her bias in other interpersonal relationships) that she reached the tipping point in therapy. It was the therapeutic relationship that did the healing!

This book is not particularly readable, but it tells a marvellous story. The therapist (Dr. Irvin Yalom) offered individual therapy to a young woman who struggled with her inability to experience emotions, write, and assert herself, provided that the therapist and the patient would keep a journal of each therapy session. Over the span of two years, they had sixty sessions in total and they also exchanged their writings several times. Not surprisingly, the therapist and the patient had very different understanding of therapy. I would say that we therapists are often delusional—we think we know what is best for our patients and we believe we

understand what our patients experience because we make the agenda. However, the patient might have a completely different agenda and they might be looking for totally different things in treatment. The patient we know is what the patient wants us to know. The therapist, on the other hand, is the one who does not know but thinks he knows. The skills and techniques that we take pride in mean nothing to our patients. Instead, it is our care and love and the resulting trivial words/acts that matter to our patients. Who would have thought about that?

Care for your patients and the skills will come.

K says

Great concept, unfortunate execution.

I love the idea of reading therapist and client write-ups of the same sessions – I thought it would be fascinating to see the differences in perception and emphasis. Unfortunately, although Dr. Yalom's session notes are readable and coherent, Ginny's leave a lot to be desired. They're unfocused and difficult to make sense of. You can't really tell what happened in the session from her perspective; at most, you get a vague sense of a few of the feelings she felt which seem minimally, if at all, tied to anything specific from Dr. Yalom's notes.

To be fair to Ginny, she writes early on that she doesn't feel it pays to rehash the details of the sessions in her write-ups; Dr. Yalom was right there with her and, in her mind, he was the only one who would be reading these notes. Unfortunately for me, though, this meant that the experience I was hoping for, the opportunity to follow the session first through Dr. Yalom's eyes and then through Ginny's, was sadly lacking.

It's kind of ironic that Dr. Yalom (as well as some reviewers) wonders whether Ginny was being exploited in this project. I actually have the opposite opinion – Ginny was receiving free therapy with a Stanford-based psychiatrist in exchange for these write-ups, and they're pathetic (Yalom, oddly, praises them; I'm not sure what he saw that I missed) – not to mention the fact that she periodically fails to submit a write-up and makes inadequate excuses. She even admits at one point that she should really be putting more effort into the write-ups. As a reader, I heartily concur.

I suppose it's to be expected that a book like this would feel boring and repetitive; that's the nature of ongoing long-term therapy and naturally not every detail is interesting. Additionally, although Dr. Yalom confesses to having had publication at the back of his mind at the time, ostensibly the project was not originally aimed at an audience other than therapist and client. Still, I would have been more tolerant of the book's tediousness had I felt I was truly gaining insight from forcing my way through it. Dr. Yalom's notes did enlighten me about the process of therapy from his perspective, how he calculates his moves, his therapeutic rationales, and his errors. Ginny's, unfortunately, did not teach me much about what it's like to be a therapy client.

Dr. Yalom's afterword was excellent, but I'm not sure it was worth slogging through the entire book to get to it. Ginny's, predictably, appeared to be a recounting of her final break-up with her boyfriend and didn't tell me much about her therapy's impact on her life.

Abbas Madani says

Jason Pettus says

Last year I started seeing a therapist for the first time, initially as a side-effect of the computer programming bootcamp I was attending; this particular bootcamp, in fact, keeps a paid therapist on staff in order to offer free sessions to their students, but I ended up responding so well to the process that I continued seeing her in private practice once every two weeks after bootcamp was over.

One of the things that's become of interest to me because of it is understanding more about the therapeutic process itself -- as I mentioned to her a few weeks ago, when you're a client and have never experienced therapy with other clients, you have no way of comparing what your experience is like to what others go through, other than to refer to famous therapy situations in movies and television, and God only knows how realistic THOSE are -- so she recommended this book to me, in which back in the early 1970s a therapist and a creative writer made a deal to each keep a journal about their feelings after each session they had, only comparing notes with each other after the experiment was over and a book was published of both journals.

I have to admit, it's a fascinating read -- it's amazing to see how many times the two would have the exact opposite reactions to a particular thing that would happen in a particular session, and it was also really interesting to see how the behavior that the client thought of as "natural and spontaneous" was in so many cases in the therapist's eyes an expected reaction based on classic personality patterns he studied as a psychology student. Also interesting as simply a time capsule of the countercultural era -- taking place in the San Francisco Bay area, the journals are filled with references to encounter groups, active sexual manipulation of patients as a form of "intimacy therapy," and "shocking" new revelations about how beneficial it can be for a couple to attend therapy together -- this will be of strong interest to those like me who have had positive experiences with therapy themselves and are now curious to see how the process compares and contrasts to someone else's experience. It comes recommended specifically to those people.

stephanie says

definitely not a favorite, when compared to Irvin Yalom's other works. Love's Executioner shows both his growth as a therapist and as a writer when you compare it to this book.

the thing that really unsettled me about the book was the sense that ginny was on a completely different page from yalom and that he was, in a sense, using her - in exchange for free sessions, she had to write these write-ups which he would later put together with his own. it's incredible for that feature - that you can see both sides of one therapy session, but at the same time, it felt a little dirty. much of it is dated, but i do appreciate yalom's constant honesty - he admits where he screwed up, missed the boat - if not with ginny, at least with the reader.

probably my least favorite of yalom, but one of the best conceptual ideas for a book i've come across in a long time.

Stef says

I get about one book every year that I manage to read at exactly the right time in my life. This is one of them. Not only am I the same age as Ginny Elkin when she started this therapy, I also have a lot of the same problems. Reading about her therapy was like therapy for myself, and I learned so many things about myself, about others, and life in general that it feels right to call this book life-changing.

As such this review isn't going to be much help to anyone who just wants to read an interesting book. The writing style is difficult in parts (I found Dr Yalom's reports often unnecessarily long-winded), and if I didn't relate so strongly to the client in this situation I doubt I would have enjoyed this book very much; as it is with therapy, so many things are repeated over and over again so that the frustration both participants felt becomes palpable to the reader, and not in a good way.

For anyone interested in this book I'd recommend reading both forewords; if you can't relate to the problems described in them, don't bother. If you can, it might just be an amazing read.

ece says

Kendi terapi seanslar?m?n biti?yle bu kitab? bitirmem ayn? döneme denk geldi. Özellikle de terapi sürecindeki birinin gözlerini aç?yor resmen. Yalom'un ba?ka ba?ka kitaplar?n? okumak dile?ile yorumlamak u - u

Nur Ötken says

Ginny ad?nda genç bir kad?n?n terapi süreci. Irvin Yalom herkesin anlayaca?? bir dilde kaleme alm?? terapileri. ??in güzel taraf? her seans?n sonunda iki taraf?n da dü?üncelerini kaleme almas?. Terapinin ilerleyi?i bu sayede gözler önüne seriliyor.

Maria Bikaki says

Δεν ?χω διαβ?σει π?ρα πολλ? βιβλ?α ψυχοθεραπε?ας και επ?σης αυτ? που πιστε?ω γι' αυτ? ε?ναι ?τι δε μπορε?ς να πεις σε κ?ποιον να, αυτ? ε?ναι το τ?λειο βιβλ?ο ψυχαν?λυσης για σ?να γιατ? πολ? απλ? ο καθ?νας θα σου προτε?νει και ?να διαφορετικ? με β?ση αυτ? που μ?λησε περισσ?τερο

στη δικ? του ψυχοσ?νθεση. Κ?νω αυτ? τη μικρο?λα εισαγωγ? γιατ? επιλ?γοντας το συγκεκριμ?νο βιβλ?ο ε?χα διαβ?σει αρκετ? σχ?λια δικ? σας εδ? αλλ? και ξ?να ?που οι περισσ?τεροι συμφωνο?σαν ?τι σαν βιβλ?ο δεν ε?χε τ?σα να πει ?σα ?λλα του Γι?λομ και ?τι παρ? την ενδι?φερουσα ιδ?α το αποτ?λεσμα ?ταν μ?λλον χλιαρ? και για ?λλους βαρετ?.

Εδ? λοιπ?ν αυτ? ?ρχεται αυτ? που σας ?λεγα πιο π?νω περ? προσωπικ?ς αναζ?τησης και αν?γκης καθ?ς το συγκεκριμ?νο βιβλ?ο προσωπικ? σ' εμ?να ?κανε πολ? καλ? και με βο?θησε αρκετ?.

Δεδομ?νου ?τι το ξεκ?νησα πολ? διστακτικ? αφο? τελε?ωσα τον Ν?τσε και για αρκετ?ς μ?ρες το ε?χα αφ?σει στην ?κρη ?ταν το ξανα?πιασα μου δημιο?ργησε μια απ?στευτη ?κρηξη συναισθημ?των και προβληματισμ? που για να ε?μαι ειλικριν?ς δεν το περ?μενα και με εξ?πληξε. Υπ?ρξαν στιγμ?ς που ν?μιζα ?τι εγ? καθ?μουν στην απ?ναντι καρ?κλα στη θ?ση του θεραπευ?μενου, ? παιρνα το μολ?βι και κρατο?σα τις δικ?ς μου σημε?ωσεις. Σε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο καταγρ?φονται καταστ?σεις, σκ?ψεις, πρ?ξεις οι οπο?ες ναι σαφ?στατα στην κοινων?α που ζο?με που οι περισσ?τεροι δε δ?νουν δεκ?ρα για την ψυχικ? υγε?α τη δικ? τους και των γ?ρων τους πολ? πιθαν?ν να φαντ?ζουν αν?ητες και υπερβολικ?ς ?ταν για την ηρω?δα του βιβλ?ου αποτελο?σε ?να γολγοθ? που ?πρεπε ν' αν?βει με απ?τερο σκοπ? να ξαναγωρ?σει την καλ? εκδοχ? του εαυτο? της. Δεν ε?ναι μια διαδικασ?α ε?κολη, χρει?ζεται π?στη και επιμον? και προσπ?θεια. Δεν ε?ναι καν π?ντα ε?κολο να το καταγρ?ψεις στο χαρτ? ?σο καλ?ς γραφι?ς και αν ε?σαι π?σο μ?λλον ?ταν μιλ?με για μια απ?πειρα καταγραφ?ς μιας πραγματικ?ς ψυχοθεραπε?ας και δεν ε?ναι ?να προ??ν απ?λυτης μυθοπλασ?ας.

Βρ?κα πραγματικ? εξαιρετικ? ενδιαφ?ρον εγχε?ρημα να καταγραφε? η πορε?α μιας ψυχοθεραπε?ας και ακ?μα πιο ενδιαφ?ρον ?τι ?γινε και απ? τις δ?ο πλευρ?ς. Απ? τη μ?α η αγων?α του ψυχοθεραπευτ? να βρει την ?κρη του ν?ματος και να βοηθ?σει τον ασθεν? του και απ? την ?λλη η προσπ?θεια του ασθεν? να βρει το δρ?μο του. Θα υπ?ρξουν στιγμ?ς που και οι δ?ο δε θα ναι το ?διο αποδοτικ?, που η κουβ?ντα δε θα οδηγε? σε καν?να φως και ?λλες π?λι που ?λα θα λειτουργο?ν ρολ?ι και ?πως λ?ει και η ηρω?δα στο τ?λος του βιβλ?ου: « ?σες φορ?ς και αν κουλουρι?στηκα, με ξετυλ?ξατε»

Κλε?νω μ? ?να αγαπημ?νο μου απ?σπασμα:

Μερικ?ς φορ?ς η ζω? μου φα?νεται τ?σο περιορισμ?νη, χωρ?ς ρ?ζες για να τραφε? πραγματικ?. Ε?μαι σαν φυτ? εσωτερικ? χ?ρου, ταμπουρωμ?νο σθεναρ? στη γλ?στρα του. Αν δε με ποτ?σουν και δε με μετακιν?σουν, αν δε με βγ?λει κ?ποιος στον ?λιο και δε με μαζ?ψει ?στερα απ? αυτ?ν δεν πρ?κειται να κρατ?σω. Ακ?μα ?μως και με μερικ?ς ρ?ζες εκτεθειμ?νες να ?χουν βγει απ? τη γλ?στρα ?ξω στον α?ρα και ακ?μα και με τη γλ?στρα που ε?ναι υπερβολικ? μικρ?, δεν τα π?ω και ?σχημα. Υπ?ρχει περ?πτωση να μπορ? να συνεχ?σω ?τσι, χωρ?ς να χρει?ζεται να με μεταφυτ?σουν. ?σως το να ζω τη ζω? μου ?πως ε?μαι τ?ρα προκαλ?ντας μικρ? προβλ?ματα στον εαυτ? μου ?πως το σπ?τι και το φαγητ?, να μου δ?σει λ?γο κουρ?γιο..... Φαντ?ζομαι την ψυχιατρικ? σαν κ?τι που ε?ναι σε θ?ση να γεφυρ?σει το χ?σμα αν?μεσα στον πραγματικ? μου εαυτ? και στον εαυτ? που βρ?σκεται σε χειμερ?α ν?ρκη και που τον ονειρε?ομαι. Τ?ρα ε?μαι σε μια κατ?σταση ?ρεμης πολιορκ?ας ?που προσπαθ? ν' αντ?ξω εν?ντια στο μ?σα μου. Νι?θω εντ?ξει.

Vera Pns says

Το βιβλ?ο αυτ? αποτελε? προ??ν εν?ς θεραπευτικ? συμβολα?ου αν?μεσα στον ?ρβιν Γι?λομ και μια κοπ?λα, την Τζ?ννυ, στο οπο?ο συμφ?νησαν να καταγρ?φουν χωριστ? τις εντυπ?σεις και τα συναισθ?ματα τους ?πειτα απ? κ?θε συνεδρ?α ψυχοθεραπε?ας. ?τσι το βιβλ?ο αυτ?

διαπραγματε?εται τη σχ?ση που αναπτ?σσεται αν?μεσα σε θεραπευ?μενο και πως

εξελ?σσεται αυτ? στην π?ροδο του χρ?νου. Θεωρ? αρκετ? ?ξυπνη και πρωτ?τυπη την ιδ?α και ?ταν και ο λ?γος που επ?λεξα να το διαβ?σω. Πρ?κειται για την ολοκληρωμ?νη πορε?α της θεραπε?ας απ? δ?ο διαφορετικ? σημε?α θ?ασης. ?να βιβλ?ο που δεν απευθ?νεται μ?νο σε ?τομα του συγκεκριμ?νου επιστημονικο? πεδ?ου και διαβ?ζετε αρκετ? ε?κολα και παρουσι?ζει αρκετ? ενδιαφ?ρον. Το προτε?νω σε ?ποιον ?χει την περι?ργεια να δει πως λειτο?ργησε η ψυχοθεραπε?α στην συγκεκριμ?νη περ?πτωση και κυρ?ως στην σχ?ση που αναπτ?χθηκε αν?μεσα στον θεραπευτ? και το θεραπευ?μενο και πως προσ?γγιζε ο καθ?νας τους τη κ?θε συνεδρ?α και τι συμπερ?σματα ?βγαζε απ? αυτ?v.

reed says

Dr. Yalom suggested to a client that each of them should write about their therapy sessions and they exchanged their write-ups every six months over two years of therapy. This is a compilation of their writings.

It's an interesting idea, but the results are kind of boring, which makes sense since they were only writing for themselves, not to entertain the reader. Dr. Yalom is constantly mentioning what a good writer Ginny (the client) is, but I found her to be irritatingly vague and unfocused.

Still, some aspects of the book are amusing. It was created in California in the 70s and is full of references to encounter groups and esalen and the like. And, like a lot of writing from that era, there is a preoccupation with gender roles -- they both cycle through questioning, defending, and being completely blind to the differing expectations and prescriptions around male and female behavior.

Selin Akal?n says

A must read for everyone who is interested in psychotherapy.

Benan says

Yalom ile ilk olarak “Nietzsche A?lad??nda” isimli kitab? ile tan??m??t?m. Nietzsche a?larken, onun anlayabildi?im, anlayamad??m tüm duygular? için ben de gözya?? dökmü?tüm. Belirli aral?klarla, Yalom’un psikoterapi yakla??mlar?n? ve ilgili vakalar? anlatt??? tüm kitaplar?n? okuyarak Nietzsche’yi anlamak yolunda anlaml? bir ad?m atmaya karar vermi?tim. Asl?nda deyim yerindeyse and içmi?tim. Yazar?n “Güne?e Bakmak Ölümle Yüzle?mek” isimli eserini okuduktan sonra amac?ma ula?mak için daha planl? ve programl? okumam gerekti?ine inand?m. Öncelikle benim gibi s?radan insanlar?n varolu? kayg?lar? ile nas?l ya?ad?klar?n? kavrayabilirsem, Nietzsche’yi anlamaya biraz daha yakla?aca??ma inand?m. Bu sebeple temel olarak yazar?n varolu?cu psikoterapinin esaslar?n? anlatt??? “Varolu?cu Psikoterapi” isimli kitab?n? okudum. Daha sonra yazar?n “Ba??lanan Psikoterapi” isimli kitab? ile “?imdi ve burada” n?n kahramanlar?ndan biri olan psikoterapiste biraz daha yak?ndan balmaya karar verdim. Böylece “?imdi ve burada”n?n di?er kahraman?, yani potansiyel bir “dan??an” olarak, psikoterapistlerden neler bekleyebilece?ime ili?kin önemli bilgiler al?rken ufak tefek de olsa onlarla ilgili baz? gizleri ke?fetmenin keyfini de ya?ad?m. Amac?m sadece bir psikoterapiste de?il ayn? zamanda beni çok etkileyen bir yazara da daha fazla yak?nla?abilmekti. Romanlar?ndaki karakterleri esas olarak nas?l yarat?yordu? Karakterler aras? ili?kileri “edebiyat” ile nas?l örüyordu? Ya da benim bir türlü tam olarak anlayamad??m

Nietzsche'yi nasıl çözüyordu? Romanlardaki tüm karakterler arasında ilişkileri daha iyi kavrayabilmek için, öncelikle, varoluş sancıları yaşıyan bazda ikili ilişkilere tek tek bakmanın faydalı olabileceğini düşünüyordum. Bu sebeple de 5. kitap olarak yazan “Her Gün Biraz Daha Yakın” isimli kitabı okudum ve bunlarla nasıl başa çıkabileceğimi düşünüyordum :

Yalom her zamanki s?cakl???n?, sevecenli?ini ve zarafetini konu?turmu?. Konuyu, psikoloji ile ilgili hiçbir profesyonel u?ra?? olmayan, s?radan okurlar?n?n be?enisine sunmadaki ustal???n? bu kitab?nda da göstermi?. Özellikle sonsöz k?sm?nda, Ginny'nin öfkesini ifade etme korkusunu y?lan korkusu gibi bir korku ile ayn? düzlemden ele almas? oldukça etkileyici olmu?.

Bu kitapla, özellikle savunma amaçlı? oldu?unda bile, yerinde ve doğru kullanıldığında, öfkenin ne kadar gerekli, ne kadar insanca bir duygusal olduğunu gördüm. Suçluluk duygusunun ise, sadece öfkeye değil de? il di? er ba?ka duygulara da etlik edebilecek çok temel bir duygusal olduğunu kanıtladı. "Öfke ve suçluluk neden genellikle yan yana olurlar? Acaba öfkenin sadece yakışıklı? olduğunu? gördük?ümüz için olabilir mi?" diye aklımdan geçirdim.

"Kültür farklı mı? kolları psikoterapi yaklaşımları neden etkilemez mi?" sorusu kitap boyunca hep kafamı bir kenarında kalmış. Türkiye'de Yalom'un anlattığına benzerEFFAF ve özgün psikoterapi örneklerine rastlayabilsem, çok mı?racam? düündüm.

Dr. Yalom'un yazd??? mektuplar benim için her zaman daha anla??labilir olurken, Ginny'in sadece birkaç mektubunu tamamen anlad??m? söyleyebilirim. Ancak probleminin çözümünde ilerledikçe Ginny'nin bunu yaz? diline de yans?tt??n? dü?ündüm. Kafas? kar??k insanlar? biraz da bu sebeple anlamakta zorlanmam?z normal de?il mi diye sordum kendime. Dr. Yalom'un aç?klamalar? olmadan böyle bir insan? anlamam?n gerçekten çok zor oldu?unu dü?ündüm. Ama sonuçta psikoterapistlerin biraz da bunun için var olduklar?n? dü?ündüm.

Ginny'nin son mektuplarında metaforlar çok ho?uma gitti. Bir tanesi : "Rüzgarda savrulan ve bir yere konmayan bir tüy gibi hissediyorum kendimi."

Bu kitab? ile daha sonraki y?llarda yazd??? “Nietzsche A?lad???nda” isimli kitab?n? kar??la?t?rd???mda, Irvin D. Yalom’un edebi yetene?ini oldukça geli?mi? buldu?umu söyleyebilirim.

Psikolojiye ilgi duyuyorsanız bu yazarı takip edin derim.

Samar says

Beyza says

Benim için ilginç bir kitapt? çünkü okurken kendi seanslar?m hakk?nda bol bol dü?ündüm. Bir de Yalom'un kendine bu kadar aç?k olabilmesi inan?lmaz geldi ama Ginny'nin ve herkesin ihtiyac? olan ?eyin bu aç?kl?k ve samimiyet oldu?unu biliyorum. Yine de özellikle ruh sa?l??? alan? d???ndakilere Yalom'un terapilerini anlatt??? di?er kitaplar?n? öneririm.
