

BOOK REVIEW

The Emotional Literacy Handbook by Antidote (David Fulton Publishers 2003) ISBN 1-84312 060-7 (paperback). Pp. 144 + viii.

The book is produced by Antidote, the name for the Campaign for Emotional Literacy. It defines this as follows: "Emotional literacy is the practice of thinking individually and collectively about how emotions shape our actions, and of using emotional understanding to enrich our thinking". There are five chapters, twelve appendices listing relevant organisations etc, and 24 case studies. The chapter headings are: Emotional literacy basics, Elements, Contexts, Strategies, and Conclusion – education for an emotionally literate society.

The tone is set by a quotation from Michael West and Malcolm Patterson of the LSE: "It is the management of their human needs, the release of their creativity, the coordination of their efforts and the creation of cooperative and effective communities which determine the productivity of organisations". The book opens with the statement that in 1997, when Antidote held its first conference on emotional literacy, few were familiar with the term and even fewer recognised in it the seeds of an effective strategy for enabling schools to promote learning, community and wellbeing.

The book contains very useful guidance for enabling schools to reduce stress and conflict among pupils (or "learners", as we must now call them). It emphasises the valuable contribution that can be made by pupils taking the lead in tackling disputes and resolving conflicts. The solutions children work out among themselves, under suitable guidance, are always likely to command most assent and be most successful.

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