



# *Help Me!*

A Psychotherapist's Tried-and-True  
Techniques for a Happier Relationship  
with Yourself and the People You Love

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## *Dedication*

This book is dedicated, with my deepest gratitude, to the hundreds of women, men, and children who chose to place themselves in my care and trusted me to help them successfully address the issues for which they consulted me.

Over the years, I have worked with individuals ranging in age from five to ninety. I have treated people dealing with lifelong emotional difficulties as well as those suffering from the effects of a traumatic experience, like many who came to see me after the events of 9/11. Many patients entered therapy feeling confused and defeated about their experiences and marked by frustration and failure, and left therapy having achieved meaningful growth and change along with renewed hope.

It has always been an honor to have an opportunity to become a meaningful part of each person's life in this unique relationship called psychotherapy. I would like to believe that the vast majority of my patients grew from our association. I thank them all for helping to make me a better therapist and a better person.



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## *Introduction*

If someone gave you this book, it is probably because they care about you and want you to enjoy the benefits of one or more of the essays that they themselves found helpful. They may be one of my patients who is familiar with my writing and found some of my ideas useful.

It is always gratifying to hear a patient say “That wasn’t boasting, that was pride!” or “I realized that I was only thinking about my situation, but doing nothing at all about it.” The patient who said, “For the first time I was just able to quietly listen and not feel compelled to solve her problem” made both of us happy. The patient who learned to distinguish between reacting and responding was able to master the latter and diminish the frequency of the former.

If, because of these essays, you are able to strengthen your thinking, understand something heretofore unclear, or act in a way that represents a personal or interpersonal advance, then I, as a therapist and author, will have accomplished a very meaningful objective.

In my vocation as a psychotherapist, I have had the privilege of being invited into the private lives of hundreds of people seeking help for a great variety of reasons and I have given my best efforts to those who have entrusted me to help them improve their lives. As a result of this work, I have learned a great deal about why some

people manage to thrive and succeed while others struggle or fail, why relationships are so difficult for so many and what can be done to make them more successful and fulfilling. I have heard many people describe their lives and their relationships as downhill rides and I have come to understand what can be done to help change that.

This book is a compilation of essays about the social and psychological phenomena that have come up in the course of my efforts to help the people in my care. These individuals and couples have provided me with opportunities to explore and share observations and ideas that have aroused my curiosity and interest throughout my years as a helping professional. “Is dependency unhealthy?” “Why am I shy?” “If there is an us, what happens to me?” and “Am I dating or am I in a relationship?” are just some of the questions I explore.

One of the common laments heard from many people who have sought help is that after much therapy they feel “insight rich and change poor,” which is the title of one of my essays. While self-awareness and knowledge increase, this does not necessarily translate into much-needed and desired change. My hope is that you will find some of the essays useful as you look to improve your own personal and interpersonal strengths, internal resources, and overall life experience. Perhaps they will assist you with converting some of your own insights into the changes you have been seeking.

My introduction to the mental health field was somewhat special. I was serving as a Peace Corps volunteer teacher in Liberia, West Africa, and needed a work project while school was out for the summer. My choice was the only mental hospital in the country. There, for several months, I worked with a Canadian psychiatrist and several native healers. The experience dazzled me and I decided to become trained as a mental health professional upon my return to the States after my two-year term of service.

I have enjoyed a diversified professional life throughout my career, both before and after entering private practice. My first job was the proverbial trial by fire. I was given a caseload of one hundred troubled adolescent boys living in a Brooklyn ghetto with a mandate to help keep them out of reform school. After that, I worked as a psychiatric social worker and group therapist in a child and family guidance center. Subsequent employment before full-time private practice included being the Executive Director at a mental health clinic in Greenwich Village, and the Director of Admissions and Student Affairs at the School of Social Work at New York University. I have also taught social work at the bachelor, master, and doctoral level at two New York universities. Currently, I am in full-time private practice in New York City and, after forty-six years, still happy to be doing the work I love.

In this book, I hope to bring all of these experiences together and convey to my readers how strongly I believe in each person's capacity to recover, to grow, to change, and to acquire new abilities and skills at any stage of life.

*Richard B. Gelman, DSW, LCSW*