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Book Review: Financial Counseling

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Book Review

Financial Counseling

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Durband, D. B., Mazzolini, A. K., & Law, R. H. (Eds.). (2018). *Financial Counseling*. 235 pp., \$79.99, ISBN: 978-3319725857.

This full-service book provides a historically-situated, systemic introduction of the financial counseling profession and an overview of the financial counseling process. The 14 chapters are a compilation of articles written by 26 of the best minds in financial counseling, therapy, planning, as well as psychology and consumer economics. These experts in practice, education, and research take turns chiming in on poignant topics that range from the history of the profession to client communication, and from self-care for counselors to theoretical and practical tips.

The early chapters situate financial counseling historically, as well as within the myriad of other professions that intersect with the scope of financial counseling. This thoughtful situating explores what financial counseling is and is not. A thorough exploration of the process of financial counseling is also included, with examples of where financial counselors work, and the types of issues they are uniquely positioned to address. One of my favorite points of these chapters was that financial counseling has a distinct beginning, middle, and end – it is not supposed to be a lifelong process. Counselors are working toward healthy self-sufficient financial clients. Practical information is included in these chapters, such as the ins and outs of referrals, what to do with a client who is not progressing, and helping your client find a good fit with a financial planner are all addressed.

Issues that are important to the financial counseling process, such as working with diverse populations and self-care for counselors, are addressed. Diversity among financial counseling clients is covered with refreshing competence and empathy. For example, cultural competence for counselors is stressed, as well as the truth that cultural competence is not a destination to be arrived at but rather an ongoing process for all financial counselors, researchers, and educators. Self-care for counselors and their clients is explained in a uniquely practical way, including the basics of getting enough sleep, eating, and being kind to oneself. While these tips for counselors seem obvious (and maybe they are), they serve as guidelines for upcoming financial counselors and a much-needed reminder for existing financial counselors.

Financial Counseling

Classical and contemporary theories and frameworks are explored over a few chapters. Information is given to compare several classical theoretical approaches, as well as four contemporary frameworks and intervention styles. These chapters are an incredible resource for new financial counselors or for seasoned experts to explore the theories that may be a good fit for them and their clients.

Practical tips about creating a welcoming space for financial counseling clients are addressed in depth and help connect the theoretical side of financial counseling with the practical application of financial counseling. The practical side of financial counseling starts with an introduction into financial decision making, moving into behavioral interventions, followed by an overview of problematic financial behaviors and money disorders, and ends with a chapter on challenging conversations with financial counseling clients. This section of the book is a treasure trove of applicable client communication tools.

The book wraps up with an extensive look at the resources and tools available for financial counseling, and finally a look at the future of financial counseling. The appendix features an impressive array of example worksheets and forms, as well as a practitioner's guide to reading research articles. These worksheets are a perfect blueprint for a new financial counselor, as well as a good comparison for existing financial counselors.

This book would be a great addition to any debt management, marriage counseling, or personal finance class, or as a compliment to every financial planning program. The book is concisely written and a pleasant read. With valuable and quality information in each chapter, the book can be used as a standalone resource or supplemental material in any financial counseling course or training seminar/workshop.