

## FOREWORD

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In Pransky, Jack (Ed.), *Prevention From Inside-Out*  
Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2003  
<http://www.healthrealize.com/InsideOutExcerpt.htm>

Every now and then a single book precipitates a revolution in human understanding and practice. Examples that come to mind are Sir Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*, which opened the door to an empirical science grounded in inductive reasoning; Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, which fanned the spirit of the American revolution; and Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which illuminated the paradigmatic nature of fundamental change in our understanding of the world around us. Whether Jack Pransky's latest book on prevention – *Prevention from the Inside Out* – turns out to have an equally revolutionary effect on the mental health field remains to be seen. I have no doubt, however, that it should. At the very least, it deserves the thoughtful attention of mental health practitioners and those who set priorities and shape the field's future.

Both scholarly and impassioned, it is grounded in thoroughgoing familiarity with theory and practice having to do with prevention and health promotion in mental health. It is based on Pransky's personal wisdom drawn from his own and others' intimate life-transforming experiences. And it is informed by a lucid synthesis of the writings of sages, scholars, and scientists who in recent years have been delving into the mysteries of energy fields and mind-body relationships. It conveys knowledge of a simple, yet transcendent, insight that is capable of transforming one's life.

In my view, Pransky's work is compatible with the familiar tri-partite public health model of host, agent, and environment. It singles out the host as the focus for the "inside-out approach." However, Pransky faults the concentration of traditional host-oriented approaches that seek to shore up individuals' deficiencies or to impart knowledge, skills, and understandings that will overcome their inabilities to cope successfully with life challenges. His contribution is oriented to the *strength* of the host. It is based on the simple, yet profound recognition that every human being is born with the capacity to function successfully and, despite virtually whatever adversities life has to offer, continues to possess that capacity throughout life. What he terms the "inside-out approach" adds a major new and exciting possibility to the armamentarium of prevention and promotion in mental health.

I am one of those who, from my own personal experience, knows whereof Pransky speaks. Much of my professional lifetime was spent on exploring approaches to primary prevention in the mental health field. From 1953-63 I directed an experimental preventively-oriented community mental health program in Wellesley, Massachusetts associated with the Harvard School of Public Health (Klein, 1968). The next ten years saw a dramatic upsurge in the development of community-based programs in the field. In 1976 I was one of the prime movers of the Pilot Conference on Primary Prevention sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health. In the mid-1970s, however, I became aware of a promising new development. A friend and colleague (Dr. Roger Mills, then Director of the Lane County, Oregon mental health program) alerted me to

the impressive effect a wise teacher, Sydney Banks, had been having on the emotional and physical well-being of hundreds of people in British Columbia simply by talking with them about the wisdom he had gained from his own sudden and unexpected personal enlightenment. At Roger's urging, my wife Lola and I paid two visits to British Columbia to see for ourselves. We talked with couples whose lives had been dramatically transformed by, to use a slang expression common to that area of Canada at the time, "twigging" to what Sydney had to say. Even more impressive was the second visit, during which we spent three days at a resort with individuals and their families who had been affected by Sydney's teachings. Among them were about twenty children of varying ages, who spent much of their time playing with one another in and out of the pool. We were amazed to notice that during the entire three days we did not hear one child cry. Neither did we notice any instance of a child teasing or getting angry at another. Nor did we observe any parents scolding or disciplining their children. Clearly something extraordinary was going on here. These were healthy, active, apparently normal children. Absent were the usual flare-ups of negative emotions or indicators of sibling rivalry that one would ordinarily expect to observe not once but many times in a group such as this over a three-day period.

When we talked with Sydney, his only response was, "All you need to do is set your mind aside." When I replied that I was an intellectual whose mind was a tool of his trade, he responded, "Don't worry about it." Towards the end of our second visit, we spent a memorable winter's evening with Sydney, his wife, and mother-in-law in their home by the edge of a ship channel on SaltSpring Island, British Columbia. We walked through a tunnel of over-arching, snow covered trees to the house and sat quietly talking with Sydney about the wisdom he had discovered, as through a picture window we saw an occasional ghostly freighter glide by. We came away from that evening with at least a glimmer of understanding of what Sydney was talking about. From that time on, our lives, too, were transformed as we discovered what I have in recent years come to speak and write about as one's inherent "power of appreciation" (Klein, 1988, 2001.)

I use the term "appreciation" to refer to the capacity we are born with to feel at one with the universe and to experience the awe and wonderment of life. Everybody I've talked with has experienced such appreciation more than once in their lives but, with rare exceptions, only under special circumstances. After leaving SaltSpring Island that evening in the 1970s we realized that we felt such awe and wonderment when we watched beautiful sunsets. What happens, we asked ourselves, when the sun goes down and that wondrous feeling disappears? Where does that feeling go? And where is it now? The answer was obvious. The feeling does not go down with the sun. It remains within each of us. Somehow we had bought into the idea that we needed special occasions, such as sunsets, to make it okay to experience that good feeling. Then we remembered something Sydney had said, which neither of us understood at the time, to the effect that the way to gain knowledge and understanding was to "allow" oneself to have "good" feelings. Until that moment we had interpreted his remarks as the equivalent of the kind of advice Pollyana might offer, such as: "See the good in everything" or "In every cloud there's a silver lining." Now, however, the light dawned. We became aware that it was the good feeling that mattered, not having to justify those feelings. We now knew that we had such feelings within ourselves and we were in control of them. That is, we could, if we chose, experience those feelings no matter what was happening in our lives!

From that time on, with occasional lapses into anger and other negative ways of responding, we viewed life and one another through the remarkable lens of appreciation. It was as if our windows to the world had been scrubbed clean of all manner of intellectual and emotional dirt. We experienced deep joy, more available energy, creative possibilities, and a far clearer sense of how to deal with whatever challenges presented themselves...

Thus, from two decades of immersion in community-based preventive programs in mental health plus my own transformative personal discoveries, I welcome Jack Pransky's important contribution. Drawing from my own professional and personal discoveries, I believe that,

provided the field is ready for a paradigm shift, *Prevention from the Inside Out* offers the basis for a profound revolution in the nature and focus of mental health work.

[1] In fact, throughout this book I repeat many points in different ways because some people will relate to them better when stated differently, or they will hear them differently later after they have absorbed more. Therefore, what may sound redundant in some places is for a purpose.