

Enjoy
Life with
Idiopathic
Scoliosis during
Adolescence

Psychology for
professionals of scoliosis

Elisabetta D'Agata



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Psychology for professionals of scoliosis

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*To adolescents with IS and their families.
And to my family and all my friends
who have supported me
on this adventure.*

“You are what people see when they arrive here.
Yours are the eyes they look into when they’re frightened and lonely.
Yours are the voices people hear when they ride elevators, when they try to sleep and when they try to forget their problems.
You are what they hear on their way to appointments that could affect their destinies, and what they hear after they leave those appointments.
Yours are the comments people hear when you think they can’t.
Yours is the intelligence and caring that people hope they’ll find here.
If you’re noisy, so is the hospital.
If you’re rude, so is the hospital.
And if you’re wonderful, so is the hospital.

(...)

We are judged by your performance.
We are the care you give.
The attention you pay.
The courtesies you extend.
Thank you for all you’re doing”.¹

The president and CEO of Summa Health Systems in Ohio gave this statement printed in a wallet-sized card to all his employees reflecting values, beliefs and hope of the organization after interviewing all his workers.

1 Boyatzis R, McKee A. Resonant Leadership: Renewing Yourself and Connecting with Others Through Mindfulness, Hope and Compassion. Boston: Harvard Business Press; 2005

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Foreword

I had the privilege to meet Elisa years ago, when she came to Barcelona to write her Doctoral Thesis. I had the feeling, for a long time, that the quality of life of adults living their lives with a scoliosis was related, in some way, to the scoliosis they had but also to the way they 'wore' the scoliosis they had. At that time, I started to explain adolescent and their parents, when proposing any type of treatment strategy that most probably, for their future quality of life, it would not be so relevant the end result in terms of a particular angular value, but the way we, forming a team, were able to manage the whole situation, looking always for converting it into a positive experience. I always thought that creating nocebo expectations to adolescent, even with the best intention of looking for treatment compliance, was a bad strategy.

I am convinced that this book that Elisa has created, from her own personal experience, but finely structured in the best way from her long academic and professional background, will become a classic into the collection of books of all those professionals, doctors, physiotherapists, orthotists and psychologists, working in the field of Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis. She tells us about the importance of the Bio-Psycho-Social model, the importance of looking at the adolescent as a full person in the way of becoming a healthy, functional and mature adult. It is our responsibility to collaborate with the family in achieving this important objective. I advocate for

young doctors, physiotherapists, Orthotists and Psychologists getting a humanistic education, and this precious book will help very much on this task. It is not just about psychology; it is about human rights.

Elisa, thank you very much for this contribution, which will help all of us to develop better in our profession.

Manuel Rigo

Medical Doctor, PhD

Rigo- Quera- Salvá Institut
Barcelona, Spain

Elisa has given us wonderful insight into the human side of AIS. In this book she gives us tools to observe the people who come to us for help with scoliosis, empathize with them and connect with them where they are. Using her suggestions which are backed by scientific research, we should be able to serve these individuals and help them achieve their potential, not only with the exercise program but in their wholeness as they mature and move from adolescence into adulthood. Her own personal experience with scoliosis and her years as a psychologist working with this population have given her a rich insight into the journey. These concrete tools will help professionals to assist adolescents while they navigate the challenges.

Beth Janssen

Physical Therapist

Certified BSPTS/SBI Instructor
Scoliosis Rehab Inc – President
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Elisa has done a beautiful job of navigating the challenges of the head and the heart of the adolescent scoliosis patient. Her work goes beyond the structural and sterile stereotypes that unfortunately may come with AIS. She dives deeper into the person, not the patient.

I've been following Elisa's work for just a few years, but in that time, I've seen her passion shine through. Her understanding of the Bio-Psycho-Social (BPS) elements has helped not only her patients, but other professionals like me.

Every time I see Elisa present, I learn something new. Her compassion for people connects her academic and professional experiences seamlessly. This book is a resource for all of us. It's thoughtful, insightful and most of all, human. But then again this is Elisa, so I'm not surprised it's so hard to put down!

MS, CPO (UK), CO (US), Grant Wood

Medical Doctor, PhD

Align Clinic, LLC

CEO and Co founder

San Mateo, California

The following work, by the passionate author Elisabetta, invites us into a creative journey, without a doubt to redefine Scoliosis in teen years, through a scope of harmony and hope.

We can have a deep Bio-Psycho-Social (BPS) understanding in the treatment.

On her investigation, intervention and vision as a Psychologist and Psychotherapist, the author suggests an inclusive and Integrative model, where the teenager has a voice, and

is co-author in the process of self-regulating and finally transforming.

This way Scoliosis becomes itself an internal dialogue, between oneself, its biography, emotions, self-perception, and the possibility of a new narrative.

This transformation goes way beyond an anatomical matter or about the cure of a pathology.

By abandoning the cartesian model, this proposal provides, dare I say, an antidote to this era of «Chronical Illnesses», thus making this way professionals more humanized instruments, with a more personalized approach to each case, creating safe bond states, constructing deep bridges between the psychological, neurological, biological, emotional, behavioral systems and their secondary benefices as an engine to the teenager patient.

Integrating the macro-vision since the beginning, where the contact with one self, the family system as well as their surroundings, will amplify the perception of the whole process.

A proposal that without a doubt will not leave indifferent the several professionals working on the treatment Idiopathic Scoliosis in teenagers, thus opening a window of opportunity of new abilities to a new field of intervention in this and other similar areas.

Maria del Mar Cegarra Cervantes

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Psychotherapist in Biosynthesis
Specialist in Psychosomatic, Epigenetics
and Neural Biology
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All of you who are reading this book, for your interest. I look forward to hearing from many of you through my email: dagata.e@gmail.com