You are going to read some reviews of self-help books. For questions 1–10, choose the best answer from sections A–D. Some of the choices may be required more than once.

About which book is the following stated?

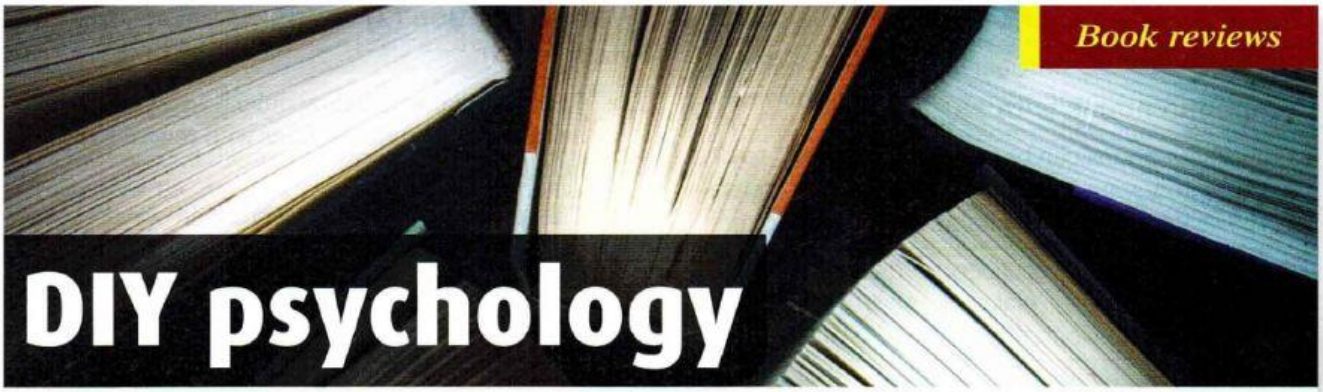
It can be an enjoyable read irrespective of whether you have problems.	1	_____
It presents ideas in language that is accessible to the non-specialist.	2	_____
It examines the evidence to support some of the claims made by exponents of self-help.	3	_____
It offers a step-by-step guide to working through a psychological dilemma.	4	_____
It describes ways in which people can make the most of their unfulfilled potential.	5	_____
It suggests that people may be encouraged to have unrealistic expectations.	6	_____
Many of the suggested therapies are based on a recognised methodology.	7	_____
The quality of writing makes the advice appear more credible.	8	_____
It suggests that we should view one particular negative emotion as something natural.	9	_____
It offers comfort and advice to those frustrated by seemingly straightforward problems.	10	_____

6 Check the meaning of these key words from the text.

EXPERT WORD CHECK

fallacy fabrication advocate misconception perspective jargon prose pronouncement solace premise

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DIY psychology

Books offering self-help and advice sell in their millions. We take a look at four of the most popular.

A *The last self-help book you'll ever need* by Paul Pearsall

In this book, Pearsall explores the tendency for proponents of self-help therapy to substitute clichés for serious thought. Hackneyed fallacies like 'be all that you can be', 'live up to your full potential', 'nurture and understand your inner child', are just a few of the arguably silly fabrications that masquerade as legitimate advice, and Pearsall exposes them to the light of scientific scrutiny. Primarily, this book advocates accepting that you may never become a concert pianist or an international footballer, and concentrating on achieving what is within your reach. You can derive more happiness from life, he suggests, when you appreciate your current situation and those around you. Were people less caught up in the misconception that they should be happier and more fulfilled, they probably wouldn't be so discontented. Pearsall sees much of what we might term 'therapeutic culture' as based on rather questionable remedies that over time have gained the status of unassailable truth. He effectively explores the validity of these assertions from a more objective, down-to-earth perspective.

B *Instant confidence* by Paul McKenna

McKenna puts forward the notion that people who feel they lack confidence are in fact confident – if only in the belief that they have no confidence! He offers techniques to help people develop their hitherto suppressed abilities and apply these to situations in which they may be of use. Many of his suggestions follow well-known coaching concepts familiar to practitioners of neuro-linguistic programming. However, the book is written in a refreshingly down-to-earth style that avoids the almost incomprehensible jargon which some self-help practitioners are prone to! One of McKenna's key ideas is to encourage people to visualise and experience as far as possible what 'the confident you' will be like. He advocates the simple use of a technique which helps to reframe negative 'inner thoughts' in a 'positive' way. Don't expect to develop instant or total confidence as a result of reading this book, but if you follow the suggestions and practise them, you should make some progress.

C *Help: How to become slightly happier and get a bit more done* by Oliver Burkeman

This is a genuinely useful book; the writer really does want us to become slightly happier and get a bit more done, just as the title promises us. In a winning aside, he says that 'adding an exclamation mark to the title of your book isn't necessarily going to help make it fun. (There are some exceptions.)' And this is an exception, because it is fun, and can be read for pleasure even if you judge your self-management and feelings of personal fulfilment to be in good shape. I like to think that a decent prose style is one of the guarantors of sanity, and Burkeman has a lovely turn of phrase, neither too dry nor too flashy; but a sort of just-rightness that makes his pronouncements sound wholly trustworthy. In short, *Help* is win–win. Should you find yourself prone to those niggling difficulties which, though surmountable, are disproportionately aggravating, then you'll find solace and good counsel here.

D *Feel the fear and do it anyway* by Susan Jeffers

The subject of this book rests on the following premise: fear is a necessary and essential element of life and pushing through fear is actually less frightening than living with a feeling of helplessness. Susan Jeffers highlights the paradox that whilst we seek the security of a life free of fear, this creates an environment in which we are denied the satisfaction of achievement or development. The result is a no-win situation in which we experience both a fear of change and fear of staying the same. The book introduces a progression of truths which illuminate the crippling effects of fear and build the case for taking action to address the problem. Given that you accept these truths, you can change your attitude and approach. A number of simple models and techniques are engagingly presented through a series of first-hand accounts of people at various stages of succumbing to or addressing their fears. When strung together, these provide a structured programme with which you may set about changing your attitude and raising your self-awareness and self-esteem.

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