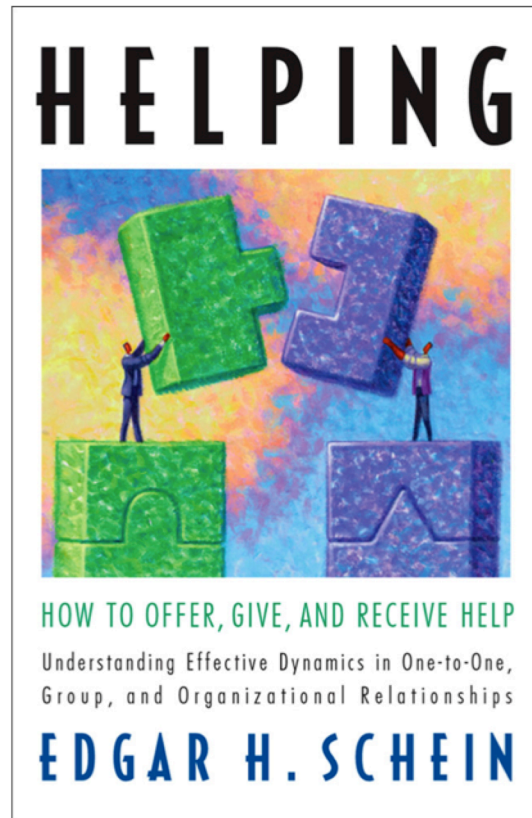

BOOK REVIEW

"Helping – How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help" by Edgar H Schein

Berrett-Koehler Publishers:
San Francisco, Calif, 2009
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[Paperback for around \$13.77
on www.amazon.com
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Edgar Henry Schein was born on March 5, 1928. He is a former professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Schein has made a prominent mark on the areas of organisation development, which includes career development, group process consultation and organisation culture.

According to Facebook, he received his undergraduate education at the University of Chicago and Stanford and later went on to do his PhD from Harvard's Department of Social Relations.

Edgar Schein's book, "Helping – How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help" has been received well all over the world. It is important when reviewing this book to focus on what 'help' actually means to humanity. Help can be looked at in many different forms

and can be taken in many different ways (sometimes however, not with open arms). Schein touches firstly, upon why help can sometimes be viewed as not helpful and he demonstrates and shows how those people wanting to help can insure that they come across as useful.

Helping is a fundamental human activity, but it can also be a frustrating one. All too often our sincere offers of help are resented, resisted, or refused -- and we often react the same way when people try to help us.

Edgar's book which was named one of the top five leadership books of 2009 by "Strategy+Business" Magazine, looks at the social and psychological dynamics common to all types of helping relationships. Edgar Schein analyzes the social and psychological dynamics common to all types of helping relationships, explains why help is often not helpful, and shows what any would-be helpers must do to ensure that their assistance is both welcomed and genuinely useful.

This book speaks to everyone. Schein has focused on case studies in the book that would be most interesting to business consultants and those people in leadership roles. These are areas that Dr Schein has great personal experience in as well. Using examples from many types of relationships -- doctors and patients, consultants and clients, husbands and wives -- Schein offers specific techniques and illuminating examples that help us determine what type of help to offer and how best to offer it in any situation. These techniques not only apply to all kinds of one-on-one helping in personal and professional relationships, teaching, social work, and medicine, but also can be usefully applied to teamwork and to organisational leadership.

Outlined in this book is that effective help occurs when the helping relationship is taken to be fair. Effective help takes place when the helper chooses the appropriate role. Effective help always starts with a respectful inquiry and importantly, the helpee owns their problem.

Dr Schein has touched upon not only his professional life, but experiences from his personal life, to look at the theory of helping more closely. Helping is in all aspects of our lives, whether it's to help our children, whether it's teachers to students, managers to employees or government to citizens. Even though it is present everywhere, it is sometimes misunderstood as indicated above.

A helping relationship is one that is best based on trust and unity. Like a relationship between partners there is trust, so help is taken upon with an open mind. However, in a relationship of two strangers for example, it is an unbalanced situation and one without trust, meaning the dynamics of help can be wrong.

There are three kinds of helping roles as well as three applications of help.

The three kinds of helping roles consist of; the knowledgeable role, which consists of the helper having knowledge or skill that can be applied to give advice or help to the client's problem. The second is the doctor role. This role is as it sounds and relates to the helper diagnosing what the problem is and prescribing a solution. More often than not, the helper is hired. The final role of helping is process consultation, which means that the helper engages in asking about the problem, but avoids being seduced by their position of power.

Moving on to the three applications of help. These consist of Teamwork, Leadership and Management consulting, and, Helping in Organisational Change.

Starting with the first application of help - Teamwork. Teamwork is essential in successful business. If we look at a team consisting of everyone being a helper and everyone being a client then this can form a successful team in any business. Leadership and Management Consulting is the second application and is a little more complex. In business, we have many teams where some of these teams may have different goals. The job of the Leader must be clear to establish what the goals of the business or organisation are, but also be willing to help employees achieve them. The final application of Help is Helping Organisational Change. This is the most complex application of the three. This application contains all forms of help discussed, being one on one, in teams, and by the leadership itself. The main goal of the leader is to change people's perception when change is non-negotiable. Part of Schein's argument is that this is best overcome by "reframing the process" from a change process to a helping process.

Leaders in this day and age must be process consultants, even when change has to happen. Through leaders' respectful inquiry, they can find out what the constraining agreements are and why old ways are being held onto. This then helps the leader to look at what first steps the client could take to move forward to new ways. Each area of the company must be thought of as being a client that can help or harm other areas of the company.

Edgar Schein in this book has successfully analysed what it takes to successfully establish helping relationships.

[Dr Darryl Cross is a clinical and organisational psychologist as well as a credentialed executive and personal coach. He is also an author, international speaker and university lecturer. Dr Darryl assists people to find their strengths and reach their goals. Further information on Dr Darryl can be seen at www.DrDarryl.com]