



The following information is intended to help you write a clear and concise book review for The Therapist. For each book review you submit, you are required to include:

- 1) Properly formatted reference and reviewer information.
- 2) A book review that follows the SCOR model outlined below.

I. Reference and Reviewer Information

Reference and reviewer information must be included at the top of the first page of the book review. Be sure to combine book title, author, and reviewer information, followed by an APA citation¹:

Format Example:

The Body Keeps the Score
By Bessel A. van der Kolk

Reviewed by Michael Smith, LMFT

Citation:

van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score*. New York, NY: Viking
ISBN: 978-0-670-78593-3

¹ APA citation information can be found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2013), or online:
<https://www.library.cornell.edu/research/citation/apa>

II. Consider Book Review Goals

A book review in *The Therapist* should provide, in **600 words or less**, a SCOR: Summary, Context, Opinion, Review.

- **SUMMARIZE:** To provide readers with a brief summary of the information presented in the book being reviewed.
- **CONTEXT:** To place the book in a greater context. What makes this book important or relevant to readers today? For example, a book on bullying is could be considered relevant because of the current issues surrounding school-based violence.
- **OPINION:** Opinions that balance the book's strengths and weaknesses in order to help a reader make an informed decision about the book's value. *An opinion may at times be strengthened by a brief mention of the book reviewer's professional credibility or expertise, but this must be limited to 2-3 sentences in order to avoid straying too far from the review. (Remember, this is a book review, not an autobiography. Avoid self-promotion at all costs.)*
- **REVIEW:** To provide a review of the thesis of the book. In most cases, an author will take a stance or pose an argument. As the reviewer, you should discuss how the author succeeds or fails to demonstrate a strong thesis, citing examples drawn from the book being reviewed.

III. Book Review Sample

In *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014), author Bessel van der Kolk adds an essential contribution to the growing body of literature on trauma. But what sets van der Kolk apart from many other authors is the breadth of experience he brings to his writing and his ability to weave a relatively understated autobiography into a highly informative book, leaving the reader with the knowledge that he is undoubtedly, and deservedly, one of the preeminent authorities in the field of trauma today.

Beginning with the history or “rediscovery” of trauma and moving into neurobiology, trauma and development, memory, and finally, processes of healing, the author gives readers a thorough overview of how our understandings of trauma in its current forms have come to this point. He begins by discussing the intersections of combat trauma and child abuse, using case studies to accurately illustrate the shared experiences of countless survivors. He then details the physiological and biological underpinnings of trauma, as well as the issues surrounding PTSD/CPTSD diagnoses. He then moves into a larger discussion about trauma and the body:

“Trauma victims cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend the sensations in their bodies. Being frightened means that you live in a body that is always on guard. Angry people live in angry bodies. The bodies of child-abuse victims are tense and defensive until they find a way to relax and feel safe. In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past” (p. 101).

It is in this discussion that the author’s more “alternative” aspects to healing begin to emerge; a clinical proclamation that has helped him gain significant notoriety in certain circles but discredit in others. For many of the practices that van der Kolk

suggests are still on the fringes of healing—practices including neurofeedback, the oft-debated EMDR, and body-based improvisational theater, for example, lack the empirical strengths of CBT and other evidence-based treatments. But this is precisely why I have enjoyed *The Body Keeps the Score* so much. The author isn't afraid to use his status to introduce unrecognized modalities of healing to the greater Academy, and he supports these ideas with decades of involvement in trauma research and theory development. He unabashedly asks his readers to shift their thinking—to move away from a medicalized model of care and move towards a proactive, experiential type of healing that can be adopted by individuals and institutions alike. And while van de Kolk's personal accounts can sometimes distract the reader and turn one's attention away from the educational elements of a given passage, he makes up for it with a prosaic combination of clarity and detail. As an MFT specializing in trauma, I highly recommend this book for any mental health practitioner who would like to learn more about PTSD and the still-emerging field of relational trauma from one of the foundational trauma researchers of our time.