“Clinical neuropsychology is a curious beast, representing equal measures of science and art. It encompasses the science of brain-behaviour relations and the art of unmasking, as well as the applications of these skills on many different levels. Neuropsychology can be very technical on the one hand, but can also demand extraordinary compassion and humanity (‘clinical neuropsychology’). This definition, offered by the authors of this book, is the simplest, but most insightful, definition I ever heard of the experience of working as a clinical neuropsychologist. To become acquainted with, and comfortable around, this curious beast may take years, or decades, particularly if you lack the necessary guidance. And if you search for advice in books, most of the clinical neuropsychology books [the so-called handbooks] work like a taxonomy listing followed by a cookery book. They describe the syndromes in detail, tell you how to differentiate one from another, and then they suggest a set of recipes. These books may give you important knowledge in understanding the beast’s behaviour, as a map of South America will give you important knowledge regarding the locations of cities and where one country limits to another. However, such abstract books tell you nothing about the experience of becoming a traveller – how to behave in a specific culture, which places to visit, where to ask for help. These books say nothing about the journey of becoming a clinical neuropsychologist, the basic equipment you need to carry with you, or the basic skills that you need in order to do the job competently. This book by Coetzee and Balchin is a companion on the journey, a sort of travel guide on the continent you need in order to do the job competently. This book is in this section where the practical tips, and the points of reflective practice, come into their own. The final section on Professional Issues is quite interesting too, since it moves the reader’s attention away from the tasks involved in everyday work, to issues of professional development, such as professional practice, supervision, research/academia and management.

The reason underpinning this book’s unique quality is that it is written by clinical neuropsychologists who have experienced first-hand what it is like to work with brain injury in under-resourced settings [South Africa and rural Wales]. This is a common reality across many countries [developing and developed], where the resources may not permit the delivery of full packages of rehabilitation in the conventional sense, or permit mentoring of junior colleagues at every stage. Coetzee and Balchin confront the limitations and seem aware that, in those contexts, less may be more. They know that learning a basic set of skills, which can be put then systematically into practice, can make a huge difference. Their book is a materialisation of this idea. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in using clinical neuropsychology to help individuals with acquired brain injury.