

## Expanding Reading Promotion in University Libraries through “Developmental Bibliotherapy”: With a Discussion on the Connotations of “Reading Therapy for Emotional Distress” Book Categories for Contemporary College Students (Post-print)

**Authors:** Xu Yan

**Date:** 2025-06-16T15:42:52+00:00

### Abstract

The article expounds upon the fundamental principles of developmental bibliotherapy, targeting various common and prevalent emotional distress issues among contemporary college students. It emphatically recommends “book prescriptions” selected by relevant experts from both domestic and foreign literature to strengthen college students’ personal emotional regulation management and mental health development. The article further calls for university libraries to centrally procure domestic and foreign “healing (therapeutic)” literature and creatively establish “emotional healing reading spaces” under such names as “Reading Delight Bar,” “Worry-Free Book Corner,” and “Heart-Warming Reading Room.” It also advocates prioritizing the training of dedicated librarians with academic backgrounds in psychology, education, and reading culture studies to engage in specialized collection management of “healing (therapeutic)” literature and provide reader services and reference consultation in these “healing reading spaces.” Through these initiatives, the article aims to deepen, expand, and innovate college student reading promotion efforts, thereby contributing to campus academic atmosphere and spiritual civilization construction.

## Full Text

# Expanding University Library Reading Promotion through “Developmental Bibliotherapy”: On the Connotation of Reading Therapy Bibliographies for Contemporary College Students’ Emotional Distress

Xu Yan, Professor and Doctoral Supervisor, School of Information Management, Nanjing University, Nanjing, 210023

**Abstract** This article elaborates on the fundamental concepts of “developmental bibliotherapy” and, addressing the various common emotional disturbances among contemporary college students, focuses on recommending “book prescriptions” carefully selected by experts from Chinese and foreign literature. The aim is to strengthen college students’ personal emotional regulation management and psychological health development. The article further calls on university libraries to centrally procure Chinese and foreign “healing (therapeutic)” reading materials, creatively establish “emotional healing reading spaces” under names such as “Joyful Reading Bar,” “Worry-Free Bookstand,” and “Heart-Warming Study,” and prioritize the cultivation of specialized librarians with backgrounds in psychology, education, and reading culture to manage “healing (therapeutic)” collections and provide reader services and reference consultation in these “healing reading spaces.” Through these measures, libraries can deepen, expand, and innovate college student reading promotion efforts, thereby contributing to campus academic atmosphere and spiritual civilization construction.

**[Keywords]** Bibliotherapy; College Student Emotional Disturbance Reading Therapy Bibliography; University Library

## 1. The Concept of “Developmental Bibliotherapy”

Developmental bibliotherapy represents a mature approach within reading therapy. Ji Xiuzhen, a faculty member at Nanjing Normal University’s School of Psychology, notes that reading not only enhances knowledge but also elevates one’s spiritual realm. When college students, who generally possess strong reading capabilities, encounter emotional and psychological distress, appropriate reading can help them resolve various worries and anxieties on their own. In the preface to *Reading Therapy*, Wang Bo, Deputy Secretary-General of the National Steering Committee for Higher Education Library and Information Work, wrote that reading appropriate materials can help individuals relax emotions, relieve stress, and achieve the goal of dispelling psychological ailments.

In the field of reading therapy, developmental bibliotherapy is designed for individuals experiencing negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. It encourages and guides readers to obtain solutions to problems through reading relevant literature, thereby generating positive progress. Chen Shumei defines bibliotherapy as a method that utilizes the reading process to help individuals address emotional issues, achieve self-adjustment, and promote psychological

health growth or assist in treating diseases, particularly emotional and affective disorders. Professor Qiu Jiongyou concurs with this concept and methodology, noting that reading therapy involves targeted content in books that can improve readers' psychological states.

Developmental bibliotherapy is based on the inherent potential for personality development and the positive psychological pursuit of self-actualization that all normal individuals possess. For college students who encounter emotional problems such as anxiety and depression during their growth process, this approach has demonstrated positive effects. It plays a constructive social role in promoting emotional healing, optimizing mental states, and maintaining psychological health. Librarians engaged in reader services and reading promotion activities in university libraries should familiarize themselves with basic knowledge of psychology and its sub-disciplines—such as educational psychology, developmental psychology, and abnormal psychology—to guide college students in selecting appropriate books for reading.

## **2. Analysis of *College Student Emotional Healing Picture Book Bibliography***

The compiler of this bibliography is Professor Chen Shumei from the Department of Library and Information Science at National Taiwan University. After completing her undergraduate degree in library science at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan, she pursued graduate studies in the United States, earning a master's degree in educational psychology and a Ph.D. in library and information science. During her time in the U.S., a university library staff member recommended healing books to her, which helped alleviate the pain of losing a loved one and enabled her to personally experience how reading therapy could provide comfort during emotional distress.

Chen Shumei later taught at National Taiwan University's Department of Library and Information Science, offering courses such as "Developmental Picture Book Bibliotherapy and Emotional Healing for College Students." In the preface to *College Student Emotional Healing Picture Book Bibliography*, she expressed her hope that through this book, students would understand the healing functions of picture books, learn the methods and effects of this approach, and develop resilience and coping abilities when facing unfavorable events. After teaching at National Taiwan University, she integrated reading culture with psychology and medicine, exploring both theoretical and practical aspects of bibliotherapy's role in psychological construction for specific groups.

Chen Shumei systematically identified six common categories of emotional disturbances among college students in Taiwan, including confusion about self-worth, negative emotions caused by external differences, anxiety about the future, and feelings of confusion regarding career development. She advocated for university libraries to pay attention to college students' potential need for emotional healing reading materials and to prioritize the collection development of

such resources, thereby providing students with a convenient channel for emotional healing that respects personal privacy.

### **3. Analysis of *Reading Cures Heart Disease***

Gong Meiling, a national second-level psychological counselor and senior librarian, graduated from Liaocheng Teachers College in 1985 and was subsequently assigned to work at Taishan Medical College. Throughout her career in university libraries, she witnessed numerous cases of emotional distress among college students and recognized the important relationship between psychological construction and reading. A survey she conducted among students at Taishan Medical College revealed that 63.3% of college students had turned to books to solve psychological problems, with 21.7% seeking books due to romantic troubles, 16.7% due to employment pressure, and 13.3% due to sexual confusion.

Gong Meiling observed that college students in late adolescence face three major life issues: career development, social interaction, and mate selection. Various factors during this stage can cause psychological distress. She recognized that only when parents are mentally healthy can they raise psychologically healthy children, thereby reducing the incidence of psychological disorders among young people. Bibliotherapy, with its low cost and ability to compensate for the shortage of mental health professionals, has become favored by college students. She compiled *Reading Cures Heart Disease* by selecting typical cases of depression, social anxiety, and other serious psychological problems, providing background explanations for each case and analyzing them through three components: the client's story, reading therapy principles, and follow-up on therapeutic effects.

### **4. Analysis of *College Student Common Psychological Disturbances Symptomatic Bibliography***

Under the commission of the Reading and Mental Health Professional Committee of the China Library Society's Reading Promotion Committee, Gong Meiling developed this bibliography. After extensive research and consultation, it was officially released in December 2018. The bibliography provides targeted recommendations for various psychological issues, such as books for overcoming communication difficulties, reducing depression, understanding and enjoying solitude, reducing employment pressure, alleviating romantic troubles, and establishing entrepreneurial confidence. Wang Bo, who has long been dedicated to bibliotherapy research, emphasizes that each recommended book should specify its applicable emotional and psychological conditions and target age group, similar to how drug indications must be accurately listed.

### **5. Analysis of *Contemporary College Student Emotional Disturbance Reading Therapy Recommended Bibliography***

For four consecutive years, the author has offered an elective course titled "Reading Therapy and Appreciation of Literary Masterpieces" for graduate students

at Nanjing University. With the assistance of doctoral students and master's students, the course employs a teaching model combining instructor guidance, student sharing, extracurricular reading, and final paper assessment. The research team identified common emotional problems troubling college students and recommended suitable Chinese and foreign books for each category, forming a bibliography of 120 titles.

The bibliography addresses issues such as social anxiety, confusion about life, romantic troubles, employment pressure, depression, and life changes. For instance, Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged* is recommended for social anxiety, while Yu Hua's *To Live* is suggested for confronting life changes. This *Contemporary College Student Emotional Disturbance Reading Therapy Recommended Bibliography* represents a research outcome of the National Social Science Fund project "Research on Crisis Intervention Strategies for Reading Atmosphere in Higher Education Institutions." The research team sincerely hopes to receive valuable feedback from readers to further extend and refine the recommended bibliography.

## 6. Conclusion and Outlook

College students currently face increasingly severe emotional and psychological distress during their campus life. Since most students lack basic knowledge of psychology and mental health, and because families and campuses often harbor serious misunderstandings about psychological issues, students are generally reluctant to actively seek help from psychological counseling centers. A 2020 health survey report on Chinese college students disclosed that 22.8% had experienced psychological problems in the past year.

Developmental bibliotherapy represents an effective strategy to address this situation. It can guide individuals to truly understand their emotional states and psychological needs, clarify reading objectives, and select appropriate materials. The process can be summarized as: analyzing the individual's psychological problems, providing suitable reading materials, and achieving emotional relief and psychological balance through purposeful reading. Some researchers emphasize that beyond practical applications in preventing and treating negative emotions such as anxiety and depression, bibliotherapy should also be recognized for its important role in promoting self-actualization and spiritual nurturing.

University libraries should take immediate action by centrally procuring healing reading materials, creatively establishing self-service reading spaces such as "Joyful Reading Bars" and "Heart-Warming Studies," and prioritizing the cultivation of specialized librarians with backgrounds in psychology, sociology, and reading culture. These professionals should manage specialized collections and provide reader services and reference consultation in healing reading spaces. Through these efforts, libraries can deepen, expand, and innovate college student reading promotion, contributing to the healthy development of campus academic atmosphere and college students' mental health construction. The ul-

imate humanistic concern of reading therapy lies in helping individuals achieve psychological balance and spiritual harmony, enabling them to live in harmony and cooperation with all people.

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.*