

# YOUTH

## Inside the mind

A new TV series, based on a book, highlights professional psychoanalysis, **Yang Yang** and **Xu Lin** report.

A new TV show *Nyu Xinlishi* (The Psychologist) touches upon psychoanalysis, as people are paying increasing attention to mental health during the rapid social transformation.

The show features a 30-year-old female psychologist He Dun, who aspires to help more people to solve their psychological problems. As she helps more people, she gets to understand better her own psychological problems.

In total, the TV series presents 10 psychoanalytic cases that represent the problems people often face. These include school-bullying, divorced parents who don't tell their children in high school about the divorce worrying it will impact their performance at the college entrance examination, a weakness for always trying to please others and postpartum depression.

This is arguably the first TV drama in China that focuses on the topic of psychoanalysis, claims Guo Feng, the show's producer.

"There are other TV plays that include this topic but very few focus on it specifically. The topic is very attractive to me also because psychoanalysis is an emerging treatment in China," he says.

In October 2016, the government launched the Outline of Healthy China 2030 Plan, in which mental health was included for the first time as one of the healthy standards, he says.

The 40-episode TV drama, starring actress Yang Zi and actor Jing Boran, is adapted from Chinese writer Bi Shumin's novel of the same title that was first published in 2007.

Bi, 69, had been a doctor for 20 years before studying psychology in 1998. After studying in Beijing Nor-

mal University for three years, she started receiving visitors. Based on her professional knowledge and practice, she created a situation where a poor, smart young woman from the countryside named He Dun became a psychologist and helped not only her visitors but also herself.

"Although she had gone through a lot when growing up, the tough heroine believed in the bright side of humanity and tried to help others bravely and kind-heartedly," Bi says.

"I wanted people to know through reading this novel that a lot of behavioral problems are caused by psychological factors, and there exists mentality besides the body," she says.

Fourteen years have passed since the novel was published, however, the major categories of psychological problems, such as self-abasement, incapability to deal with intimate or workplace relationships, family-of-origin issues and so on, have not changed much, Bi says.

"But the good thing is that now more people pay attention to their mental health," she says.

However, it is not easy to adapt the original fiction into a TV drama that will have to cater to the taste of current audiences, not to mention the difficulties in balancing the professional standard of psychoanalysis and the dramatic plotting.

"Compared with 10 years ago, psychoanalysis has been highly standardized in China, so we need to update the professional practice in the story.

"Besides, what we feel anxious and painful about today is different from what people cared about back then. Despite the common places, there are a lot of differences when it comes to details. So we changed the story the most in these two aspects," says

Zhu Li, scriptwriter of the TV series. What Zhu kept completely is Bi's narrative style.

"It's a style that the life of the psychologist He Dun and her visitors' weaved with each other, because it usually takes three to five weeks or a longer time for a visitor to complete a psychoanalytic process," Zhu says.

Yang Zi, who plays He Dun, says the stories are interlocked, and mysteries set up in the first few episodes will be cleared as the plot moves forward.

"The actual psychological counseling is mainly about dialogues, so the series takes a narrative route to present different cases in a vivid manner," she says.

"We created such a character wanting to tell people that psychologists are also normal people. When they help others, they get to know better about themselves and find solutions to their own problems. The biggest charm of He Dun is that she is just a normal person," Zhu says.

In order to better understand psychoanalysis, Zhu visited the psychology faculty of East China Normal University and Beijing Normal University and interviewed trained psychologists.

However, for a while Zhu still did not know how to write the dialogues that psychologists start with their visitors. It took two to three years for the production team to polish the script.

"When the door of psychology opens, you will find it's a boundless ocean," she says.

"But we hope that audiences can know from this TV series about the causes of the psychological problems and what they should do when they have similar problems. We tried to offer a direction for the solution. This is why we need professional psychologists' help," she says.



Top: Yang Zi portrays psychologist, He Dun, in a TV series that zooms in on people's mental well-being. Above: Veteran TV host Ni Ping portrays He's mother. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"This time I've opened another door for myself by playing such a professional psychologist," Yang says, adding that she would like to take up more roles that can bring "positive energy" to others.

In her understanding, psychologists are therapists who save patients from issues such as "depression and mania".

"I have great empathy with every case in the drama because I've brought myself into the role as a psychologist, listening to the visitors carefully," she says.

For example, parents and children should communicate more and face family issues together, she says, adding that they could turn to a counselor for help if necessary.

Yang says she is impressed by the story of a "people-pleaser" who cannot reject others' unreasonable demands.

She also talks about the case of a sexual assault victim in the show.

"I hope viewers will pay more attention to their mental health after watching the series. If you are aware that you may have some psychological problems, you have to face it bravely and seek a scientific solution, rather than take a laissez-faire attitude," she says.

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