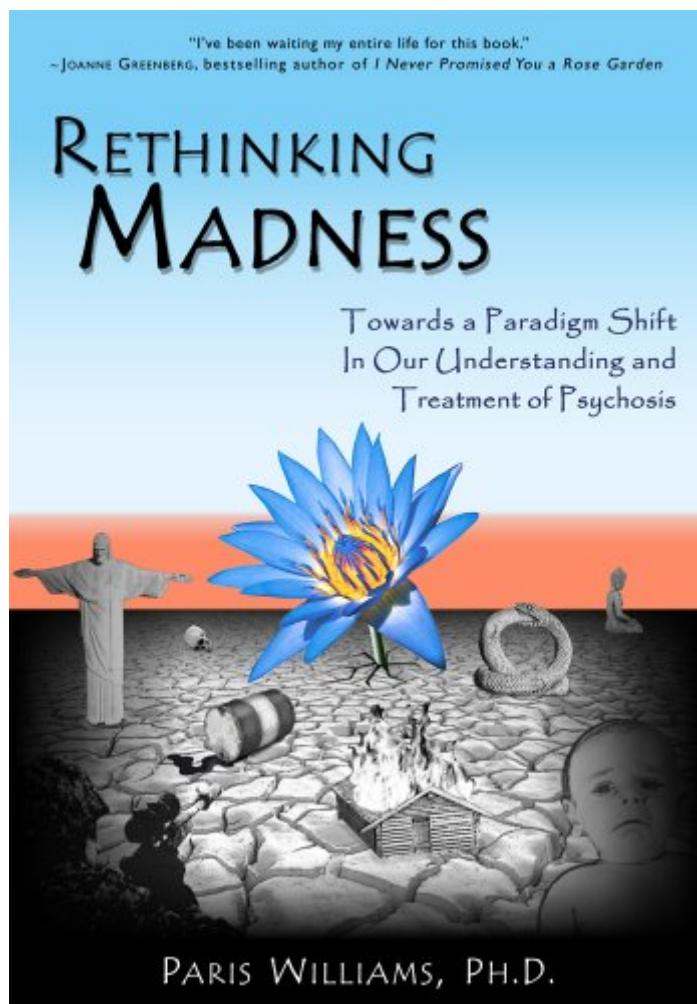


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Rethinking Madness: Towards A Paradigm Shift In Our Understanding And Treatment Of Psychosis



Synopsis

As the recovery research continues to accumulate, we find that the mainstream understanding of schizophrenia and psychosis has lost nearly all credibility.* After over 100 years and billions of dollars spent on research looking for schizophrenia and other related psychotic disorders in the brain, we still have not found any substantial evidence that these disorders are actually caused by a brain disease.* We have learned that full recovery from schizophrenia and other related psychotic disorders is not only possible but is surprisingly common.* We've discovered that those diagnosed in the United States and other "developed" nations are much less likely to recover than those in the poorest countries of the world; furthermore, those diagnosed with a psychotic disorder in the West today may fare even worse than those so diagnosed over 100 years ago. * We've seen that the long-term use of antipsychotics and the mainstream psychiatric paradigm of care is likely to be causing significantly more harm than benefit, greatly increasing the likelihood that a transient psychotic episode will harden into a chronic psychotic condition. * And we've learned that many people who recover from these psychotic disorders do not merely return to their pre-psychotic condition, but often undergo a profound positive transformation with far more lasting benefits than harms. In *Rethinking Madness*, Dr. Paris Williams takes the reader step by step on a highly engaging journey of discovery, exploring how the mainstream understanding of schizophrenia has become so profoundly misguided. He reveals the findings of his own groundbreaking research of people who have fully recovered from schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, weaving the stories of these participants into the existing literature and crafting a surprisingly clear and coherent vision of the entire psychotic process, from onset to full recovery. As this vision unfolds, we discover common factors associated with onset, deepening, and recovery from psychosis; a way to make some sense out of the anomalous experiences occurring within psychosis; lasting personal paradigm shifts that often occur as a result of going through a psychotic process; and some lasting harms and benefits of this process. . . . ways to support those struggling with psychotic experiences while also coming to appreciate the important ways that these individuals can contribute to society. . . . a deeper sense of appreciation for the profound wisdom and resilience that lie within all of our beings, even those we may think of as being deeply disturbed. . . . that by gaining a deeper understanding of madness, we gain a deeper understanding of the core existential dilemmas with which we all must struggle, arriving at the unsettling realization of just how thin the boundary really is between madness and sanity.

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Customer Reviews

Just a few years ago, the very notion that the years I spent mired in psychosis and suffering from brutal mood swings were anything but a twisted, ugly mess made me angry and upset. After years of trying different combinations of drugs that either didn't work or harmed me physically, I had finally found one that got rid of the voices and seemed to curb my wildest moods. I thought the hard part was over. I was determined to forget about the time I'd "lost" and the foul things that the voices had said and I thought that I could just pick up where I'd left off. Everyone seemed to want that for me, too, especially my parents who had taken care of me. I didn't want to disappoint them. I busied myself with work and tried to get a social life going again, despite a crippling shyness and the fear that people would ask me what I had been doing before I met them. I decided to just make the distant past I'd had before my breakdown seem like it had been the recent past...just a lie of omission. Right here on, I concluded a review of a book about mental illness by stating "I am happier and more productive than I have ever been in my life." I meant it and I thought that things

could only get better from there. But an awful ache and a terrible sense of loss took root at the very core of my being. I realized it didn't matter how many people I surrounded myself with if I couldn't be honest with any of them and that I wasn't being fully honest with myself. My moods began to wreak havoc on me again and I had to add a mood stabilizer to my drug cocktail. My happiness was slipping through my fingers. I isolated myself again and decided to do everything I could to come to grips with and recover from having been sexually abused and assaulted as a very young child. I knew it would be hard but since the memories were permeating every aspect of my life I couldn't run away from them anymore. Little did I know that I would soon come to the same realization about the voices. The voices I heard had called me terrible names and told me that I was a rotten person: rotten to the core. They said filthy, obscene things about my body, none of which were true and none of which would allow me to repeat. One of them threatened to rape me and kill my while my parents slept. Over and over again, the voices taunted me and my fear of them just crippled me. I was too frightened and confused to see what should have been obvious to anyone: that they were repeating verbatim some of the things my abuser had told me and expanding on them to a fare thee well. They were vomiting my fear and my self-loathing back up at me because I'd never dealt with them properly before. I'd walled off my memories of the abuse and kept them separate from the rest of my mind since I was three years old and there was no way to escape them anymore. I wish that I'd been able to make the connection right away, but I was scared witless and completely lacking in insight, not to mention feeling like I had been cast out of the real world and cut off from everyone. I related to no one and no one related to me. Medication seemed like my only hope and while I was fortunate to find some that helped me and yes, I am still grateful, that endeavor took years. I suffered so much before that happened and having read this book, I realize it didn't necessarily have to be that way. But it is better late than never and I'm glad I have it now. As I read the narratives of Williams' subjects, I found myself feeling envious that they had people around them in their times of crisis who did not freak out or shame them and seemed to feel far less wretched than I had about the unusual circumstances of their lives. They had been able to communicate so much better than I about the unusual circumstances of their lives and had been able to take comfort from the people around them who listened to their strange ideas. They didn't need the tremendous medical intervention I had gone through. I can't blame my parents, my doctor or any drug company for my inability to talk to the people around me. Williams' subjects all had much more expansive personalities than I and didn't feel anything approaching the shame I felt about my psychosis. Everyone who tried to help me did the best with what they had to work with: me. I know that but I still feel like I missed out on a lot. I've read plenty of "there's no such thing as mental

illness" books and I have been completely unmoved by all of them. When their authors tried to make things like hearing voices and having other hallucinations seem less pathological, I felt like they were minimizing what I'd gone through. Similarly, I felt like those who suggested that my illness might not have a physical cause were blaming me for having brought it on myself. I also found the idea that one poor excuse for a human being's assault on my mind and body could cause me such trouble so many years later to be unbearable. What makes this book different? It is not too heavy-handed and Williams doesn't preach or hector. While he has some strong opinions that sometimes clash with mine he doesn't try to force them down my throat. For instance, I do not share the author's dim view of psychiatric drugs. I realize he comes by his opinion honestly based on the studies he provides and I agree that no one should be forced to take these drugs against their will (no one should be forced to follow ANY treatment plan that they don't believe in, for that matter), but I have found my medication to be invaluable. It was the ONLY thing that made the voices stop when they did. And while my moods still ebb and flow, I have been free from full-blown mania and suicidal depression for years. (I should probably add that while taking pills that alter my brain chemistry has relieved my symptoms, it does not necessarily follow that a chemical imbalance or any other physical issue caused my problems in the first place. Taking aspirin may get rid of a headache, but that doesn't mean that an "aspirin deficiency" is what initially caused the headache to occur.) That's a fairly minor quibble considering how many new opinions and theories he presents (new to me, anyway). His Duality/Unity Integrative (DUI) Model is one of the most interesting theories about psychosis I have ever read and trust me, I have read A LOT of books about mental illness/mental health. But as I indicated before, my favorite passages in "Rethinking Madness" are the ones where Williams introduces his subjects and lets them speak for themselves. They reveal the content of their psychoses and explain how they reflected the very real circumstances of their lives in a manner that feels natural and completely unforced. They say some very strange things but they never strain credulity. They are brave enough to share things that expose them to ridicule and I am very grateful as their narratives reaffirmed my growing belief that the voices I heard really did mean something and, though unpleasant, bore further reflection. By sharing their stories, these people made me take heart and have encouraged me to keep going. I did not hallucinate about the same exact things as any one of them but I was able to see little glimmers of myself in their narratives and I was finally able to loosen my grip on some of the beliefs I've held about myself and my condition for years, many of which had been all but set in stone. Giving up what used to feel like certainties can be scary (it feels a bit like culture shock) but it is also very liberating. I am still afraid the voices will come back but much less than I was before I read this book. If they do return, I honestly believe that I'll be able

to deal with it. I will keep this book on hand forever to remind myself of that and to help me stay positive about my future in general. I still have a long way to go before I will fully be able to come to terms with the voices or with the memories that may have triggered them, but realizing that my "lost" years were not a total, senseless waste has been invaluable for me. Yes, I still feel a sense of fear and loss. No, I am not and will probably never be what most people would call "normal." Be that as it may, I have days when I feel like I'm exactly who I am supposed to be. I thank Paris Williams and his subjects for helping to reinforce this feeling and for helping it grow in me the way the sorrow and the emptiness once did.

A must read for all people affected by mental "illness" and their families. As someone diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder 18 years ago I've had two psychotic episodes and have never felt ill or out of order. Instead, I've had the same experiences as those interviewed in this book, leading a full life. Paris' model is the best example I've seen as to why. This book is full of hope and explanation. Dr. Williams, for putting into words what I have thought all along about my own experience and the mental health system in general, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

This book provides a better education on mental-illness than what I have received at my University. Written by a mind well informed of crucial studies in psychology throughout different cultures provides us with studies often not shared in the USA. Further, Paris brings in a rigorous assessment of what the implications of such studies are. Moreover, Paris has the rare gift of articulating sophisticated issues lucidly enough to be approachable for anyone unfamiliar with technical language. Where it is used in quotes, She breaks it down. This is one of my three favorite books pertaining to mental illness. More significantly, the implications of this book can really change what you recommend or don't recommend for your clients, so more than just having a greater appreciation of what "mental illness" is or may be, this book has pragmatic value.

The rates of recovery in 3rd world countries where medication is not the treatment of choice for psychosis are high while recovery is not an option for psychotic individuals in America. Research notes high recovery rates in 3rd world countries where treatment is not of an illness/brain disorder but of a journey or passage from which normalcy is an expected and common outcome. Medication management, by report of individuals who recovered from psychosis, appears to slow-down or obstruct rather than facilitate recovery. Convergent research and international data point to no brain abnormalities in individuals with psychosis until after medications. Medications appear to harden

acute episodes into a chronic condition. A must-read for anyone working with individuals with mild, moderate, or severe psychosis or psychotic episodes.

Couldn't stop bookmarking and making notes throughout this wonderful read. Working within Mental health specifically chronic and acute illness can leave you wondering about "recovery" at all. However, Paris Williams' well written and researched 'e'book is truly inspiring and refreshing. A highly recommended read for those working in healthcare, also families and carers of those experiencing mental health difficulty. Most importantly, it would serve as a helpful reference for any person experiencing challenging situations that impact upon their mental health. The paradigm shift in our understanding of madness should begin with this read because onward from this is the prospect of a more inclusive, supportive and fulfilling community right where you live! Enjoy it today for it will lighten up all your tomorrows.

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