

Meanings of madness: a literature review

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Meanings of madness: a literature review

This literature review focuses on how people make sense of mental illness. The study explores the process of meaning making by people experiencing mental 'dis-order' as it is influenced by the context of their environments, available cultural explanations and the nature of their mental states at that time. It is proposed that people experiencing psychological trauma attempt to regain a sense of order by imposing a narrative structure on these disconcerting experiences. The sharing of these personal stories with others results in meanings being shaped and refined through dialogue and across time. Socially agreed meanings, however, can have a political dimension and it is argued that personal meanings embedded in narratives of mental pain are often suppressed and categorized to fit dominant cultural or biomedical explanations. Implications for mental health nursing are discussed.

Keywords: meaning, mental health nursing, mental health, narrative, service users

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I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (Bakhtin & Emmerson 1984, p. 287).

Introduction

The nature of mental health and illness has been discussed and theorized for centuries, across disciplines and cultures. As humans, we struggle to create order out of chaos; our fear of the unknown and irrational leads us to construct accounts or stories which help us to make sense of the world and our experiences within it. Many writers have discussed the human impulse to create order and meaning through imposing a narrative structure on diverse experiences (Riessman 1993, Sandelowski 1994, Polkinghorne 1996). Mishler (1986, p. 67) states that 'telling stories is one of the most significant ways individuals construct and express meaning'. Our meanings are articulated through language which 'is our means of

ordering, classifying and manipulating the world' (Spender 1985, p. 3) and we share our stories and meanings with others to know that we are not alone. We constantly negotiate and redefine our meanings and realities across time through communication and dialogue with others (Garfinkel 1967, Bakhtin 1981). Various influences impact on how our stories are told and interpreted, such as: personality (Bruner 1987), attitudes/beliefs/culture (Hinton & Levkoff 1999), gender (Crowe 1996, Busfield 1996), cognition (Sparkes 1994, Strand 1997), mood (White & Epston 1990, Polkinghorne 1996), social context and relationships (Sarason & Duck 2000). The dynamic interplay of these forces affects how individuals construct their identities and beliefs and also influences how these expressed identities are interpreted and accommodated by their social environments. This quest for personal meaning in a social world is inevitably influenced by cultural and political forces (Saris 1995).

Mental illness represents 'a crisis of meaning' (Roberts 2000, p. 435) for people undergoing these experiences, for

Meanings Of Madness

Gail Hornstein

Meanings Of Madness:

Meanings of Madness Richard J. Castillo, 1998 This is an ideal reader for anyone interested in studying the role that culture and social background can play in the causes of and treatments for mental illness. *Meanings of Madness* explores the variety of meanings that mental illness or madness can possess and takes into account the current move to expand the traditional medical paradigm to include social and cultural factors in the diagnosis of mental disorders. The reader was written to stand alone or to serve as a companion volume for the textbook *Culture and Mental Illness* also by Richard J. Castillo. The 23 articles also include illustrations, examples and case studies that augment the topics discussed in Castillo's main text. Most of the articles are based on ethnographic research or case studies and have appeared in journals of psychiatry, neuroscience, anthropology and psychology.

The Meaning of Madness Neel Burton, Neel L. Burton, 2009 This book proposes to open up the debate on mental disorders to get people interested and talking and to get them thinking. For example, what is schizophrenia? Why is it so common? Why does it affect human beings and not animals? What might this tell us about our mind and body language and creativity, music and religion? What are the boundaries between mental disorder and normality? Is there a relationship between mental disorder and genius? These are some of the difficult but important questions that this book confronts with the overarching aim of exploring what mental disorders can teach us about human nature and the human condition. Dr Neel Burton qualified in neuroscience and medicine from the University of London and is a Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He is the author of several books including a prize winning textbook of psychiatry and a prize winning self help book for people with schizophrenia. He lives and teaches in Oxford.

Pure Types are Rare
Irwin Silverman, 1983 **Schizophrenia**, 1974 Making Sense of Madness Jim Geekie, John Read, 2009-05-06 The experience of madness which might also be referred to more formally as schizophrenia or psychosis consists of a complex, confusing and often distressing collection of experiences such as hearing voices or developing unusual, seemingly unfounded beliefs. Madness in its various forms and guises seems to be a ubiquitous feature of being human yet our ability to make sense of madness and our knowledge of how to help those who are so troubled is limited. *Making Sense of Madness* explores the subjective experiences of madness. Using clients' stories and verbatim descriptions it argues that the experience of madness is an integral part of what it is to be human and that greater focus on subjective experiences can contribute to professional understandings and ways of helping those who might be troubled by these experiences. Areas of discussion include how people who experience psychosis make sense of it themselves, scientific professional understandings of madness, what the public thinks about schizophrenia. *Making Sense of Madness* will be essential reading for all mental health professionals as well as being of great interest to people who experience psychosis and their families and friends.

Reasoning About Madness J. K. Wing, 2017-07-12 The exact definition of madness remains elusive. There are difficulties in distinguishing the criminal from the mad or more euphemistically the mentally ill. Controversy has centered on the frightening potential

possessed by the state to deprive of his rights the individual officially classified as mad In this book Wing a psychiatrist of international repute argues for a limited medical definition of mental illness although he explains how even a doctor's professional judgment may often be influenced by social pressures He compares concepts of madness prevalent in different types of society examining for example the Marxist attitude towards the deviant in a socialist state In a chapter which draws much from his own experience he shows precisely how the apparatus of state medicine is used to suppress political dissidence in Russia He also critically reviews the petty tyrannies prevalent in the West and tackles the difficult analytical problem of schizophrenia a subject on which he is one of the most respected medical authorities Reasoning about Madness is an original and important work in which the author successfully resists the temptation to erect grand theories that explain nothing because they attempt to explain everything Instead he concentrates on developing a definition of madness which strikes a balance between the benefits of medical care and the preservation of human liberties

Agnes's Jacket Gail Hornstein, 2017-09-07 In a Victorian era German asylum seamstress Agnes Richter painstakingly stitched a mysterious autobiographical text into every inch of the jacket she created from her institutional uniform Despite every attempt to silence them hundreds of other psychiatric patients have managed to get their stories out or to publish them on their own Today in a vibrant network of peer advocacy groups all over the world those with firsthand experience of emotional distress are working together to unravel the mysteries of madness and to help one another recover Agnes's Jacket tells their story focusing especially on the Hearing Voices Network HVN an international collaboration of professionals people with lived experience and their families and friends who have been working to develop an alternative approach to coping with voices visions and other extreme states that is empowering and useful and does not start from the assumption that such people have a chronic illness A vast gulf exists between the way medicine explains psychiatric conditions and the experiences of those who suffer Hornstein's work helps us to bridge that gulf guiding us through the inner lives of those diagnosed with schizophrenia bipolar illness depression and paranoia and emerging with nothing less than a new model for understanding one another and ourselves

Meaning in Madness John Foskett, 1998-08 *Schizophrenia* Alexander Ross Kerr Mitchell, 1974 *The Encyclopædic Dictionary* Robert Hunter, 1885 *The Aldrich Dictionary of Phobias and Other Word Families* Chris Aldrich, 2002 Do you know the difference between words such as ananymy anonymity and euonymy Of course you are familiar with everyday terms like homicide and suicide but are you sure about felicide femicide and feticide If not this is the book for you The Aldrich Dictionary of Phobias and Other Word Families is an authoritative guide to a selection of almost nine thousand terms many of which are found in specialist technical books and journals or other arcane literary sources only and features among other A unique arrangement of words based on 100 familiar and not so familiar English word roots i e agogue ambulation animity anthropy archy aster biosis bund chore cide clast cole cosmic cracy culture deme demonic diction digitate drome duction ennial esthesia facient fauna fluence form fuge glyph gnomy gon gony grade graphy iatrics iatry

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Table of Contents Meanings Of Madness

1. Understanding the eBook Meanings Of Madness
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Meanings Of Madness
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Meanings Of Madness
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Meanings Of Madness
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Meanings Of Madness
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Meanings Of Madness User Reviews and Ratings
 - Meanings Of Madness and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Meanings Of Madness Free and Paid eBooks
 - Meanings Of Madness Public Domain eBooks
 - Meanings Of Madness eBook Subscription Services
 - Meanings Of Madness Budget-Friendly Options

6. Navigating Meanings Of Madness eBook Formats
 - ePUB, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Meanings Of Madness Compatibility with Devices
 - Meanings Of Madness Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Meanings Of Madness
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Meanings Of Madness
 - Interactive Elements Meanings Of Madness
8. Staying Engaged with Meanings Of Madness
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Meanings Of Madness
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Meanings Of Madness
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Meanings Of Madness
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Meanings Of Madness
 - Setting Reading Goals Meanings Of Madness
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Meanings Of Madness
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Meanings Of Madness
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements

- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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