

Nine Dimensions of Madness: Redefining Mental Health

Robert L. Gallon



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In a book that reframes the mental health debate, Robert L. Gallon challenges the widely-held notion that mental disorders are medical diseases. Drawing on his extensive experience as a psychologist who has worked with thousands of patients, he argues that there are no objective indicators of mental disorders and therefore no way of drawing a distinct line between people who have them and people who don't. He outlines an alternative to the disease model defined by nine dimensions of dysfunction that encompass the range of human dysfunctions typically classified as mental disorders. He explains the origin of these problems, not as chemical imbalances and genetic abnormalities, but as the complex interaction of biological, psychological and social factors, called the Biopsychosocial model.

Gallon explains the history of psychiatry and how it came to develop a medical model that codifies mental disorders in the psychiatric bible, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), now in its fifth edition. He demonstrates how, in 1950s and 1960s when the miracle psychiatric drugs came on the market, it was to the great economic advantage of both pharmaceutical companies and psychiatrists to describe people's problems in the language of medicine. His alternative to this disease model suggests descriptive types--Reality Misperception, Mood Dysfunction, Anxiety, Cognitive Competence, Social Competence, Somatoform Dysfunction, Substance Dependence, Motivation and Impulse Control, and Socialization Dysfunction--that we can construct to discuss the kinds and severities of problems people experience. These are not discrete abnormalities, but are sorts of dysfunction that can be placed on dimensions of dysfunction.

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