

Integrative Mental Health Steps Up While Psychiatrists Fight

The [DSM-V](#), the newest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, was released in mid-May, 2013 by the American Psychiatric Association. It has been met with great controversy. For half a century the DSM has provided the language for medical doctors, insurance agents, the judicial system and individuals to identify mental illness, coordinate treatment, and facilitate the exchange of money between payers and providers. The diagnostic labels applied to patients have carried great weight in their lives.

What's now obvious is that conventional docs can't agree what mental illness is, what causes it, what the best treatment is, or what mental health would look like. Metaphorically speaking, the medical establishment and its followers are lost in the bushes without a trail, the leaders are arguing, and everyone is still using a map that doesn't get us where we were told we could go to.



Even though conflicts of interest and an avalanche of new understanding (via research) obliterated the old trail we were using, we've now got a new landscape and new opportunities. It's time to re-evaluate where we want to go (redefine what mental health is) and map the best way to get there.

More Psychiatric Drugs?

Here's the rub: After several decades of relying on psychiatric drugs for treatment, mental illness is epidemic with almost one in four people on one or more psychiatric medications. One cause is that information about mental health is typically corrupted by special interests, e.g., big pharma, as aptly reported by

[Bruce Levine, PhD](#) in a recent Truth-Out op-ed piece. The whole system needs to transform.

What's especially alarming is this: Recent research reveals that psych. drugs often reduce lifespan by 20-25 years when used long term, and most drugs for mild to moderate depression are no better than placebo (1). We have to stop over-relying on the drugs, use them with caution, and turn to other effective protocols that do no harm.

What darkens a person's prospects of getting help with mental distress? Psychiatrists are still convinced that the origin of mental disturbances are in biological problems that should be treated with drugs. Trouble is, for the most part, as the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, [Thomas Insel, MD](#) recently admitted, they haven't found the biological causes yet. Insel wrote, "The public deserves better (than what the American Psychiatric Association [APA] does to define mental illness)"...The New York Times reported him saying, "The manual suffers from a scientific lack of [validity](#)." [Allen Frances, MD](#), the head of an earlier task force to edit the 1994 APA manual, the DSM-IV, dismisses the latest 2013 edition, [DSM-V](#), saying "Don't buy it. Don't use it. Don't teach it." How can the public feel confident in psychiatry when its most well-respected leaders undermine the validity of psychiatry's "*Bible*"?



Conventional psychiatrists' medical perspective also discounts what psychologists and practical people well know: There are psychological, social and spiritual causes of disturbance that must be managed to improve mental health and we can't overlook the side effects of psych. drugs which exact a toll on physical wellbeing. This is plain common sense but not given a place in DSM-V.

According to Lisa Cosgrove's 2010 article in "[Academe](#)", 69% of the task force that edited the APA manual of mental disorders published May 18, 2013, report ties to the pharmaceutical industry. This means big pharmaceutical companies have a winning hand in the way diagnosis and treatment is managed...a hand that may exert more influence than research and science, so that drugs will continue to be advocated. Also of note: Only two countries, the USA and New Zealand, allow pharmaceutical companies to advertise on television. The result was recently reported in [the Huffington Post](#): "The eleven largest global drug companies made an astonishing \$711 billion in profits over the ten years ending in 2012".

People looking for alternatives often believe they can find what they need through Google. Think about it: search and you will find information but it may not be disclosed that many of these so-called 'informational sites' are funded by pharmaceutical companies. They want the public to buy more drugs. Despite the fact that long-term use of psych. drugs undermines physical health, many major non-profit orgs still promote a drug-based approach to mental healthcare. The National Alliance on Mental Illness, [NAMI](#), considered an independent voice, had to be forced by the US Senate in 2009 to disclose that more than 50% of its money was donated secretly from big pharmaceutical companies. It is very rare to find information that is not a sell for some special interest.

Needed: A Game Changer

What we need is what Gregory Bateson (2) referred to as 'second order of change'. That means we stop playing the same old game: myopically looking for the causes of mental illness only in our biology, treating disturbances predominantly with drugs, and never articulating what optimal mental health is. We've tried that path for more than forty years and it simply doesn't work. It's not a matter of trying harder to find the biological causes, tweaking what we know, arguing amongst ourselves about the forms of bio-medical research, and massaging our relationship with pharmaceutical companies.

We need to look at transforming the whole system. Let the pitches of big Pharma go by, stop responding to them, and see they are usually foul balls.

- **First-order change** is doing more—or less—of something we are already doing. First-order seeks to retain the status quo...the way we're used to doing things. (If conventional psychiatry has its way we'll keep to the idea that all mental illness has its roots in biology and keep pouring research dollars into research for the perfect drugs. Patients will have to continue to tolerate the side-effects, often taking more drugs.)
- **Second-order change** is deciding—or being forced—to do something significantly or fundamentally different from what we have done before. It demands a new way of seeing things, requires new learning, and produces positive transformation. (In integrative mental health we consider and work with the bio-psycho-social and spiritual causes of mental disturbance and advocate for optimal wellness. This path would diminish the power of big pharma, and optimize the possibilities for the profound happiness and peace inherent in all human beings.)

Daya Mata, the woman appointed to lead the Self-Realization Fellowship after Yogananda passed away, wrote:

"The trouble is that all of us...are a little bit crazy, and we do not know it; because people of like peculiarities mix together...The only "well-

adjusted” persons in this world are those who have attained Self-realization...Many people are a little bit off mentally, but many, many more are off emotionally—emotionally crippled, emotionally immature. You cannot deny it. It seems to me that this emotional sickness is the main problem of mankind today.

We all have to grow up, and growing up means to recognize and behave as our true Self: “I am not this emotional individual. I am not this fearful and whining person. I am not this insecure weakling. I am a part of God” ...When we become fully aware of God, when our consciousness becomes one with His, only then will we know.”
(3,p34)

This perspective is not unique; it can be found in most spiritual and religious texts. What is exciting is that this perspective is breaking ground from the interweaving of many traditions and cultures and the breakdown of the authority of conventional religion. It's become more acceptable to experience God within ourselves...it's no longer blasphemous, or a symptom of psychosis (as it once was thought to be). We have moved 180 degrees from that position. Essentially, we won't find mental health until we fully live the experience of ourselves, each one, as part of God (aka All That Is, Buddha, Christ-consciousness, etc.). The qualities that would then be evident in such a person are increased intuition, peace, compassion and wisdom.

Integrative Mental Health University

The Integrative Mental Health University, IMHU, has recently launched:

- to inform people about effective *integrative* protocols,
- meet [the urgent needs](#) we have to address mental healthcare,
- and share roadmaps to optimal mental health.

Integrative means drawing from the best methods available, both conventional and alternative, to consider the biological, social, psychological and spiritual causes of mental disturbances—and encourage optimal health.

IMHU's pioneering, [expert faculty](#) offer innovative effective practices as well as models for new kinds of clinics that treat the whole person, body, mind and spirit. The faculty are grounded in conventional psychiatry and psychology, and have furthered their education and skills beyond the limits of the conventional models. Successful models for overcoming addictions, recovery of mental health after serious disturbance, energy work to increase wellbeing, micronutrients for brain health and more will be shared-- independent of any special interests.

“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has!”—Margaret Mead

The mission of IMHU (IMHU.org), a not for profit org, is to be an un-biased online source of information for people looking for the best care for themselves and their loved ones. It pays close attention to current scientific research from all cultures. It intends to follow leaders in the field who have found effective protocols for managing mental health and acknowledge the important role of spirituality. The aim is to educate anyone who wants these perspectives on integrative mental health for as low a fee as possible. People deserve this information so they can make informed choices. It's a matter of social justice.

In the future IMHU will also give courses for mental health providers, so they can update the training they had to the most current, effective paradigm of care. As more integrative health providers associate with each other it will increase the likelihood of more clinics and hospitals forming that are based on an integrative model.

Lord Buddha once said, "The profit of the holy life is the sure, unshakable deliverance of the mind"...It means that the mind is always free from the compulsion of habits, emotions, and attachments; and is governed only by wisdom, love, and selflessness. It means that the ego no longer controls you; that you, the soul, operating through the mind, are the master of your fate. The expression of right attitude in all conditions and situations is evidence of that self-mastery...the right attitude is to go on giving sweetness, kind words, kind actions and –above all—kind thoughts...(3, p.92)

Using the metaphor of baseball, the field of mental healthcare has just opened up. The captains of the major teams (in psychiatry) are fighting in the dugout and their voices are being amplified all over the stadium by the media. Do we wait for them to finish before we play ball by their rules?

Independent, pioneering, integrative psychiatrists and psychologists are now courageously collaborating and creating their own teams—as they are doing at IMHU—taking to the field and stepping up to the plate. There are some slight changes to the vocabulary of mental health as there always are when diverse cultures collaborate, e.g., bringing in the language of Self-realization as a goal for mental health. However, they are showing they have better outcomes—with many more home runs (people recovering balance and optimizing wellness).

Are you game?

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again."—Thomas Paine



NOTES

1. Whitaker, R (2010) Anatomy of an Epidemic. NY: Crown Publishers.
 2. Bateson, G (2002) Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity (Advances in Systems Theory, Complexity, and the Human Sciences). NY: Hampton Press.
 3. Sri Daya Mata (1998) "Only Love: Living the Spiritual Life in a Changing World". Los Angeles: Self Realization Fellowship Press.
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