

Shopping for Mental Health

Even though mental disturbances are epidemic, these days we don't chat much about mental illness. Illness is not hip, cool or sexy—neither is mental health. So, when people shop for help with mental health, they turn to an online bookstore for self-help or google in the privacy of their own homes. Self-help books can assist with mild symptoms of depression or anxiety, but those with deeper-seated problems, (like addictions, ADHD, PTSD, bipolar, or suicidal depression), must look farther afield.

Marsha's Story

Marsha had gone to a dentist for special surgery, and had a toxic response to the post-surgery remedy she had been given. Her system became severely imbalanced and she had suffered from severe anxiety and depression. After months "in a fetal position," she went to a local psychiatrist and was prescribed Abilify (a powerful anti-psychotic) and took it for a year. She was then able to get up with some relief from her emotional low point, but she didn't like the side effects and how the drugs further depleted her body and compromised brain function. She believes she can rebalance her system and be off the drug. She had been searching the worldwide web for months, looking for the right person. She heard I was a source of information about qualified experts via my book, *Resources for Extraordinary Healing: Schizophrenia, Bipolar, and Other Serious Mental Illnesses*, as well as courses I'm organizing, so Marsha emailed me recently: "I'm looking for an integrative method that can help me get my mind back."

Googling Mental Health

I am sympathetic to her problem. There are many people like Marsha who find themselves uncomfortable with the current standard of care, drug therapy, and are looking for something that works better for them.

Google 'mental health' and 'mental illness' and here's what you'll find. From Wikipedia: one third of people in most countries report problems at some time in their lives which meet criteria for diagnosis of one or more of the common type of mental disorder (1). In the United States 46% qualify for a mental illness at some point in their lives (2&3). Apparently, we either have more anxiety and depression—or we report it and ask for treatment more frequently. (Too bad, isn't

it, that we don't teach kids how to manage moodiness or recognize mental disorders when it's likely they will have to deal with it in themselves or family?)

But the most alarming part of the search is the presence of overt and covert google ads for drugs. Under 'mental illness' in May, 2013, the first three entries are ads for medications. Entries 4 & 5 are for [NAMI](#), the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Their perspective: there is no cure for mental illnesses and treatment (usually involving drugs) must be continuous. Their sponsors are heavily involved with drug manufacture, e.g. Pfizer, Novartis, Lilly, enough to make NAMI dependent on their favor. There was no mention of the harm these drugs are to the body—often abbreviating normal lifespan by 20 years or more when taken long term—as reported in *Anatomy of an Epidemic* by Robert Whitaker in 2010.

"Mental health" google entries were similar to "mental illness": #1 Abilify for Bipolar-mania. #2 Abilify for depression #3 a local clinic of practitioners. Most entries on both first pages for mental illness and mental health were heavily promoting drugs without mention of psychotherapy or other effective protocols. What if one can't tolerate the drugs, or they don't seem to be working?—what is available?

It's hard to find another option and, if you do, it's hard to recognize who is qualified to prescribe it and supervise ongoing care.

Unlike NAMI, *Integrative Mental Health* providers perceive, research and report on full recoveries, i.e., cure, as a real possibility. It does not see that a broken brain or bad genes are the accurate description of mental illness, because recent research does not bear this out. 'Mental distress' is seen as a bump in the road, rather than a chronic condition; it is not seen as a lifelong condition.

The Language of Mental Health

For the most part, you have to have some kind of education to even know the terms to google: 'psycho-neuro-immunology', and 'bio-psycho-social' aren't user-friendly terms. Your mind and tongue must be trained to use them.

To google "*Integrative Mental Health*" you first have to know it exists. You are then given a few opportunities to explore that provide references to integrative mental health providers, textbooks, classes in college or graduate schools, or an international network opportunity for providers. Not much for a general audience.

Even if it is under-represented online, 'integrative' is a little easier—and nicer—word, less conflict-oriented than 'alternative'. Integrative implies some loose things are being woven together to create a viable whole. (That's reassuring for anyone 'at loose ends' or 'fractured' by trauma.)

In practice, integrative mental health refers to intelligent health providers—many of them medical doctors—drawing together the most effective protocols for mental health from all cultures into a whole treatment plan tailored to a unique individual. This paradigm includes the cautious use of drugs as well as psychotherapy, group support, peer counseling, energy work, meditation, good nutrition, herbal remedies, natural supplements, and even devices, like Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation (see photo). The therapies are not harmful to the body, are pain-free, and can be highly effective.



Answering Marsha's Call

When Marsha called I was in the process of interviewing teachers, creating a list of integrative psychiatrists who are experts in integrative psychiatry and could give presentations for an online university I am creating.

I asked her, “In your months of research have you found one site that objectively describes integrative mental health and gives people access to qualified leaders in the field so they can learn about treatments?” “No”, she said. “It is sorely needed. People with mental health issues are floundering and they don’t know how to find what they are looking for!”

That confirmed what I had found. The practitioners are pioneers—cutting through a jungle to forge new paths. Like other pioneers, they lack organization and exposure. You have to really dig to find them. Word of mouth—from other qualified experts—is often the only way. I was further inspired to help organize and give the public more access to these teachers.

IMHU

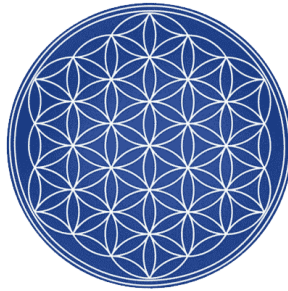
On May, 11, 2013, the Integrative Mental health University (IMHU.org) was launched. Our mission is to offer information about the paradigm of integrative mental health and also educate people about the effective treatments it uses. The teachers are the leaders in the field: highly educated in conventional psychiatry, psychology and social work, but simultaneously well versed in other effective protocols, as well. We selected faculty who feel strongly that one’s spirituality has a

very important role to play in mental wellness, people who want to encourage optimal health. They will address the needs of children, adults and elders.

IMHU will not be a clinic or referral agency to individual integrative practitioners. Referrals listed by location are available through [INIMH](#), the International Network of Integrative Mental Health. [Mother Bear](#) offers a “warm line” for phone support as well as referrals. IMHU will continue to collaborate with these organizations.

IMHU will first give online introductory presentations as well as online classes for the general public, creating an online audio-visual library that can be used in schools, colleges, support groups, churches and other community settings. Our intent is to keep the price of participation as low as possible to be accessible to the widest audience possible, around the world. Everyone deserves to know what resources are available for mental health. (It’s a matter of social justice, don’t you think?) In the future we will also host residential courses and trainings for health providers who want to become more skilled in integrative mental healthcare.

If you would like to know more, please refer to [IMHU.org](#). Consider also signing up on the site for the newsletter so you can be informed what classes are available online or on DVD/Mp3.



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Notes:

1. ["Cross-national comparisons of the prevalences and correlates of mental disorders. WHO International Consortium in Psychiatric Epidemiology"](#). *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* **78** (4): 413–26. 2000.
2. Kessler, RC; Berglund, P; Demler, O; Jin, R; Merikangas, KR; Walters, EE (2005). "Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the

National Comorbidity Survey Replication". *Archives of General Psychiatry* **62** (6): 593–602. [doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593](https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593). PMID [15939837](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15939837/).

3 [^ "The Numbers Count: Mental Disorders in America". National Institute of Mental Health](#). May 24, 2013. Retrieved May 28, 2013.