



Sober Buddha

—Counseling—

(949) 212-4149 | www.soberbuddha.com

DEPATHOLOGIZING THE SELF

THE LEARNING BENEFIT

A *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR (DSM)* diagnosis by a therapist, psychiatrist or clinical psychologist is that person's subjective evaluation of the physical, mental and behavioral symptoms you seem to show when you go to therapy.

A DSM diagnosis is not an absolute factual truth. Depth psychologists like Dr. James Hillman, Ph.D. say a diagnosis is nothing more than a description of a temporary state of mind and body move through as you become healthier and more conscious. It is important for you to understand your diagnosis and work diligently to remove its negative symptoms. Some patients, due to severe depression, cognitive distortions, unskilled therapists, incorrect medications or social stigma, allow themselves to be pathologized into believing there are trapped in their diagnosis. It is NOT true.

THE FACTS

The DSM is a valuable diagnostic tool now in its fourth edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association. Twenty-seven of the 36 persons on the DSM publishing task force are physicians or psychiatrists licensed to prescribe medications to help treat symptoms of the conditions listed in the DSM.

In its own words, the DSM says, "*.....each of the mental disorders is conceptualized as a clinically-significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress (e.g., a painful symptom) or disability (i.e., impairment in one or more important areas of functioning) or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom.*" Pg. xxxi

The DSM also says, "*A common misconception is that a classification of mental disorders classifies people, when actually what are being classified are disorders people have.*" Also pg. xxxi. This is the most important passage in the DSM's 943 pages, and the most critical for addicts. Every drug or alcohol-related disorder in the DSM, from Alcohol Abuse to Substance-Induced Mood Disorder, includes a detailed list of cognitive, physical and behavioral symptoms that interfere with the addict's quality of life, and all the labels fit.

Because a core paralogia of addiction is emotional hypersensitivity, an addict's first reaction to being labeled with a pathological disorder is get offended. This defensive response makes the addict anxious, depressed or angry and bound to project blame onto the person making the diagnosis.

An intoxicated man who exhibits symptoms of the Alcohol Intoxication diagnosis has slurred speech, unsteady gait and impairment of attention or memory, but if you point out these symptoms he may say, "What the h---- are you talking about ! I'm just fine!" and then walk straight into a plate glass window. Anyone reading this book has probably either seen this happen or done it personally.

The more severe symptoms of substance abuse and addiction do lead to life-threatening consequences, and merit the name of pathologies or "studies of suffering". The DSM is helpful in putting the criteria for each diagnosis in careful clinical terms, but it does not use language that gives deeper meaning to the suffering of the addict's soul. Since this book aims to clarify both the factual and more spiritual aspects of addiction, this distinction is critical.

Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Gustav Jung told AA-cofounder Bill Wilson, that addicts suffer from a spiritual disease. He explained to Wilson in a letter described later in this book, that they have sought connection with higher consciousness through chemicals which only serve to dull their spirit and thinking. Neuroscience validates this by explaining how addicts become enslaved to their midbrain's instinctive and animal-like craving for drugs and alcohol. The powerful and logical frontal cortex of the brain is bypassed and cannot provide the good common sense to say that the chemicals are causing trouble.

THE WRITING EXERCISE

With the exception of severe organic disease or irreparable brain damage, most addicts can recover. The diagnoses they were once given may one day become invalid. While most diagnoses are impermanent, they can still do harm to an addict's sense of self. Nobody likes to be labeled and stigmatized, and this exercise will help you take a fresh look at any diagnosis you may have been given. It can provide a lightened perspective on your current problems and motivate you to seek solutions beyond prescription medicine and traditional problem-oriented therapy. Remember that your psyche is a work in progress, not a prison. You can change. Journal on the points that follow.

I have been formally diagnosed as suffering from:

I have been prescribed these medicines:

Non-professionals (friends, family, employers) have called me:

These diagnoses and names (labels) made me feel:

And the feelings made me think:

But I think my real life challenge is:

And I would diagnose myself as:

And instead of just using prescription drugs and talk therapy, I think I need:

And I will know I am healing when: