



Psychiatric Tales: Eleven Graphic Stories About Mental Illness

By Darryl Cunningham

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Psychiatric Tales draws on Darryl Cunningham's time working in a psychiatric ward to give a reasoned and sympathetic look into the world of mental illness. In each chapter, Cunningham explores a different mental health problem, using evocative imagery to describe the experience of mental illness, both from the point of view of those beset by illness and their friends and relatives. As Cunningham reveals this human experience, he also shows how society's perceptions of and reactions to mental illness perpetuate needless stigma, for example, the myth that schizophrenic people are more likely to commit crimes than non-schizophrenic people. *Psychiatric Tales* is a groundbreaking graphic work; it deftly demythologizes and destigmatizes the disorders that 26.2 percent of American adults live with every day.

Concluding with a reflection on how mental illness has affected his own life, Darryl Cunningham's *Psychiatric Tales* is a moving, engaging examination of what is, at its root, the human condition.

Darryl Cunningham is the creator of the Web comics *Super-Sam* and *John-of-the-Night* and *The Streets of San Diablo*. He is a prolific cartoonist, sculptor, and photographer, and lives in Leeds, England. This is his first book.

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Psychiatric Tales: Eleven Graphic Stories About Mental Illness By Darryl Cunningham Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this debut book, Cunningham tells his reader right away that he has a message to impart. Having worked for years as a health care assistant in a hospital's psychiatric ward, he states his intent to counter the stigma surrounding mental illness and to represent the patients who suffer from "this most mysterious group of illnesses." The down and dirty truth about what it takes to care for dementia patients, the acts that self-harming patients are capable of, and the conundrum of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia all make for powerful, informative, and sometimes difficult reading. Cunningham's message, that "a mental illness is a brain disease just as a stroke or a brain tumor is a brain disease," is delivered in direct, no-nonsense language, while black and white drawings convey the hectic life of the disordered mind. Cunningham frequently speaks directly to sufferers, telling them that their symptoms are not their fault, that there are ways of dealing with them and simply that "you can survive." Speaking with compassion and clarity, Cunningham tells of his own struggles with severe anxiety and depression, creating a valuable tool for both those within the mental health profession and casual readers who may know someone with mental illness. (Feb.)

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From [Booklist](#)

This gem of a book examines a wide range of mental-health issues as well as Cunningham's personal experiences with mental illness. Chapters cover dementia, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, suicide, antisocial disorder, and, perhaps most movingly, Cunningham's own struggle to overcome depression. He also notes important historical figures who suffered from mental illness, such as Winston Churchill, who is now believed to have been bipolar; Brian Wilson, who suffered from hallucinations; and Judy Garland, who was beset by anxiety and depression. The concise and poignant tales, while self-contained, build upon each other and create a framework that allows Cunningham to effectively question the stigmas associated with mental illness. His inviting cartooning style mixes contrasting backgrounds with simple line drawings that leave a stark impression. The overall message—that mental illness is biochemical in origin and deserves the same kind of sympathy as other serious illnesses—is one that deserves to be heard. --Stephen Weiner

Review

"Strikingly illustrates (and demystifies) disorders such as schizophrenia, dementia, and bipolarism." *Elle Magazine*

"Straight-forward, engaging, and possessed with both great clarity and a world of sympathy for its subject matter, Cunningham's series of essays about those suffering from mental illness and the way they're treated by modern society should sit comfortably on shelves next to works like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* in terms of its easy accessibility to a wide range of readers and the humane voice that emanates from its pages. Its final chapter, in which Cunningham details his personal troubles in the course of making the work, is as affecting as any comics short story in recent memory. One imagines *Psychiatric Tales* defining, at least in significant fashion, the Yorkshire, England-based artist's career for years to come." *The Comics Reporter*

"Heartfelt... With *Psychiatric Tales*, Cunningham has crafted his own effective way to help both himself and other sufferers of mental illness." *NPR.org*

"*Psychiatric Tales* does a great job explaining this, and it would likely serve as an excellent tool for anyone

who is coping with mental illness in their own family.” ?*GraphicNovelReporter.com*

“This gem of a book examines a wide range of mental-health issues as well as Cunningham's personal experiences with mental illness...The concise and poignant tales, while self-contained, build upon each other and create a framework that allows Cunningham to effectively question the stigmas associated with mental illness. His inviting cartooning style mixes contrasting backgrounds with simple line drawings that leave a stark impression. The overall message--that mental illness is biochemical in origin and deserves the same kind of sympathy as other serious illnesses--is one that deserves to be heard.” ?*Booklist*

“Speaking with compassion and clarity, Cunningham tells of his own struggles with severe anxiety and depression. creating a valuable tool for both those within the mental health profession and casual readers who may know someone with mental illness.” ?*Publishers Weekly*

“An illustrated primer on mental illness that builds to personal revelation ... The illustrations are compelling throughout.” ?*Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

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