

THE DANGEROUS DSM-IV

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow, www.disabilityisnatural.com

Where do labels come from? Many are generated by the DSM-IV (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual—4th Edition*), the bible of “mental disorders” used by psychiatrists, psychologists, and others in the medical field (and some who aren’t), which is published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

A review of many of the diagnoses in this book led me to believe I could be considered “borderline” for a variety of different “disorders.” (And so might you!) The DSM-IV scares me, and I’m not alone. In *Plato Not Prozac: Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, author and psychologist Lou Marinoff, Ph.D., sounds an alarm when he shares that in 1952, the DSM-I listed 112 disorders. Today, 374 disorders have been “identified.” He adds, “In the 1980s, psychiatrists estimated that one in ten Americans was mentally ill. In the 1990s, it was one in two. Soon it will be everyone—except, of course, for the psychiatrists. They find ‘mental illness’ everywhere—except in the laboratory—and prescribe as many drugs as your insurance company will pay for.” And, he notes, it’s all about “power and profit” for the psychiatric and pharmaceutical industries.

Lest you think Marinoff is off the mark, consider what recently occurred in my daughter’s Psychology 102 class. The teacher (a practicing psychologist) instructed the students to write a paper on “how mental illness has affected you or a family member.” She added, “And don’t say this doesn’t apply to *you*—almost everybody has *something*.”

She’s probably right *if* you buy into some of the “conditions” in the DSM-IV. You or someone you know could probably be labeled with “nicotine withdrawal” or “caffeine intoxication.” (I think when one quits smoking, drinking more coffee is probably

automatic, so you can get two for the price of one without even trying!)

Did you know that, in addition to mental retardation, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Rett’s disorder, autism, and more, the DSM-IV also lists mathematics disorder, stuttering, pathological gambling, and trichotillomania (pulling your hair out) as “*mental health disorders*”?

According to Marinoff, the *refusal* to accept treatment for yourself or your child can, per the DSM-IV, be diagnosed as “*noncompliance with treatment disorder*.” He further notes that most (if not all) of the conditions listed in the DSM-IV *become* “mental illnesses” not by virtue of scientific research, but by being “voted in” by members of the APA. In addition, the inclusion of a condition into the DSM-IV creates an explosion of “new cases.” When ADHD was “voted in” in 1987, Marinoff writes, half a million American children had been diagnosed with the condition. By 1996, the number was 5.2 million—or 10 percent of American children. The “cure”—Ritalin—has been great for the drug industry. Yet, Marinoff concludes “...not one shred of medical evidence [exists] that ADHD is caused by any specific brain disease.”

Shouldn’t we question diagnoses that have no scientific “proof”—especially those that are becoming more “popular” (known as “epidemics” in the medical community)? And shouldn’t we take our time before deciding to accept a diagnosis (at the risk of being diagnosed, ourselves, with something that might be called “refusal to accept diagnosis disorder”)? Once a person is diagnosed, it’s almost impossible to erase the label. *And what if the diagnosis is wrong?* Rushing to get a label—in order to get services—might cause more harm than good.