

APPROACHES TO
MENTAL HEALTH AND
MENTAL ILLNESS

A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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AMAZON

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PREFACE

This book lends credence to the social sciences as basis for the study of mental health and mental illness. It is committed to bringing a public health approach to the study and treatment of persons with mental illness. The public health view has now gained some traction in nations health agenda, with a renewed interest in social determinants of health and socioeconomic disparities.

A vital issue that engages every aspect of mental health and practice is the conceptualization of mental health itself. It is seen most usefully in terms of discrete disorders or in terms of continua of mood and function. There is a resurgence of interest in conceptualizing positive mental health as well, even though determining the role of culture and values in framing what is seen as positive remains a difficult challenge.

The question remains whether social understanding is enhanced more by a focus on discrete disorders as defined by the DSM or ICD classifications, or whether we might benefit more by turning attention to dimensional conceptualizations and inquiries. Both are important and respond to different purposes and needs, however, it is clear that the balance among approaches requires reexamination.

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