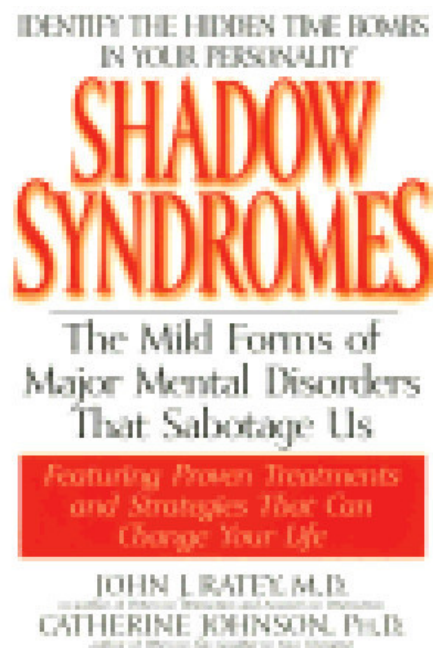




Shadow Syndromes: The Mild Forms of Major Mental Disorders That Sabotage Us

Catherine Johnson , John J. Ratey

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Are you living under a shadow?

Do you or someone you love suffer from:

Chronic sadness

Obsessiveness

Outbursts of anger

The inability to finish tasks

Acute anxiety

Disabling discomfort in social situations

These are the "shadow syndromes" of major mental disorders that limit the lives, productivity, and happiness of millions of people.

Drawing on cutting-edge research, Drs. Ratey and Johnson challenge the most basic beliefs of our mental health professionals by uncovering the biological factors that often determine our personalities. They use real-life case studies to illustrate how shadow syndromes affect our everyday lives and how they can be treated--often dramatically--with diet, exercise, psychotherapy, and medication.

Shadow Syndromes is the revolutionary theory that sheds light on our life-limiting behaviors and offers the essential tools for changing them. This book will liberate you and those you love.

Shadow Syndromes: The Mild Forms of Major Mental Disorders That Sabotage Us Details

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Andrew says

While I don't necessarily buy in to the overbearing genetics-and-brain-science dogma that permeates this book, it does put forth an illuminating idea: that there exist low-level versions of normally more serious mental disorders (OCD, depression, ADD, etc), that may be sufficiently mild so as to go undetected, but may still undermine the lives of those unfortunate enough to be under their thrall. Fascinating, and possibly therapeutic, reading.

Janet Ferguson says

Absolutely fascinating overview of some recent discoveries about the neurochemistry of the brain and its effects on our mental health and behavior. "Our question in this book is: when we -- or someone we love -- are behaving at our worst, or simply behaving irrationally, what role does biology play?" And how do environmental factors and events "interact with our biology to create the character traits and flaws that are not just written into our characters but into our neurons as well?"

Celia says

A most fun book. I swear I must have every quasi-disease in here. Very readable even if you're not into this genre, with interesting case studies and not too much psychobabble. Falls short a little at the end, but worth it in terms of the insight it provides into personality types.

Diane says

You'll finally understand that weird co-worker who keeps bugging you about the same thing week after week, or the boss who's anger is a black hole that sucks the life out of your dream job.

In an interesting, and quite believable, premise the authors explore the mild edges of psychological disorders that can disrupt, derail, or doom personal relationships and careers. Symptoms too mild for a clinical diagnosis can affect daily life without anyone being the wiser. Depression, OCD, autism, hypomania, ADD and - my personal favorite - intermittent rage disorder are discussed with case studies exploring the pluses and minuses that can accompany mild forms of these disorders.

No doubt you'll recognize friends, neighbors and co-workers in this book and come away with a better understanding of their behavior.

Katie says

To be diagnosed with a mental disorder or illness, an individual needs to meet a certain threshold of symptoms or criteria. This book addresses the milder cases of disorders – sub-clinical cases where an individual only meets a few of the criteria. This is an anecdotal look at what ‘mild’ depression, ADD, anxiety, obsessive compulsive behaviour (just to name a few) can appear as, and what people can do about it. Caution: a review on amazon.com comments that Freud once said that nobody is “normal,” and after reading Shadow Syndromes, you may well be convinced of that as well.

Grace Oh says

It's an old book, but I read it because I was interested in John Ratey (Spark.) Psychiatrist who realized there was adult ADHD - including himself. Some of the information is dated, but I'm interested in the manifestations of mental/emotional disorders that are very mild, so that people are functional in society but dysfunctional in their personal lives.

Alex Kørup says

THE GOOD:

Ratey and Johnsons "Shadow Syndromes" focuses on the mental conditions that will eventually torment nearly everyone of us some point in life, and still fall short to meet the typical diagnostic criteria for mental diseases. The book argues in favor of proactive attention to these conditions.

I liked this book for its ability to portray various personality types with amusing and informative case stories. If you like to think about personality types and/or you'd like to become better in detecting and describing exactly what makes people special, this might be an educative book for you.

Furthermore there is an important message in the book about the need to acknowledge that there is no such thing as a normal human being. We are all unique pieces of complex biology and constantly change through life. Some are just weirder than others... ;) And not least that our personality is hardwired by our biology.

THE BAD:

I'll still only give the book three stars because I disprove on the way the authors recommend a specific antidepressant drug continuously throughout most of the book. They praise the drug so highly that everyone reading the book at some time will think "Hey, maybe I should get some of those". For me this favoring of a pharmaceutical company ironically makes me sick, and sadly it shades the credibility of the authors...

Emilia says

Very readable even for the lay person. John Ratey has a gift for making this subject very accessible even if you're not into learning about the brain per se. I liken its effect to when you take that introductory psychology class in college that makes you want to analyze all your friends and relatives. There are good case studies, too.

Sophia Dunn says

The world is over-pathologised already, but if you don't take the pathological labelling too seriously, this is a useful and interesting read. It helps make some sense of those niggling (and sometimes limiting) weirdnesses in most of us.

Rachel says

For people interested in brains and their strange and painful ways. Who knows if what these guys think they know is true... This is one (Western, science-based) perspective and a good deal of it does make sense, especially the link between ADD, addiction and obsession/compulsion. Thoughtfully written, interesting and earnest, although I jumped off the train when they started imagining the creepy creepy Stairmaster™ of the future.

Laurie says

The title tells us accurately what this book is about: mild versions of mental illnesses. The authors state- and I believe them- that a mental disorder is not a discrete box to fit people into; mental disorders exist on a continuum, from almost unnoticeable to full blown psychosis (or, in the case of autism, Kanner's syndrome). They examine mild forms of mania, ADHD, depression, OCD, anger, anxiety and autism, and say "If mild forms of mental disorders are making you (and those around you) miserable, you should seek treatment and be able to be happy". They also point out that some of these mild disorders can confer advantages as well as problems: a person with hypomania can get a lot of things done; people with mild autism can focus incredibly well. Obviously, not all shadow syndromes have good sides; constantly being sad, lacking emotions, being angry all the time, perpetual worrying and having obsessions are not good things.

The authors are able to show that different mental disorders are caused by variations in brain chemistry; the neurotransmitters dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine in various amounts create different effects. Antidepressants, tranquilizers, lithium and other psychiatric meds bring the neurotransmitters back into balance. Not that the authors feel everyone with a shadow syndrome needs to go on meds; their basic prescription for brain health is enough exercise, eating healthy, proper sleep, stress relieving techniques and therapy.

I think this is a very good book that makes a very valuable point about mental disorders, that mild forms are being overlooked and the sufferer being left unhappy. I would love to see a newer version; in fourteen years a lot more has become known about the brain.

Jeffrey Borrowdale says

This book is very heavy on case studies, gives some background in possible physiological causes of these syndromes, but only gives a little general advice on dealing with the effects, including psychiatric drugs or being aware of manic tendencies and tempering them with rational restraint. I like that the authors recognize positive effects can come from these syndromes as well as negative ones.

I only read the sections on ADD and hypomania. I'm still undecided on whether these are really biologically driven or the product of mental habit and conditioning, learned responses and strategies for dealing with life's problems? It's very tempting to see my lack of focus and discipline or ambition and disconnect between self-concept and objective reality to be a brain disorder, but maybe I just have high standards or an awareness of unrealized potential others lack.

I like to think I have cultivated a positive mental attitude over the years and it has made me a more positive, happy and productive person, but is the reason I sought out positive thinking books in the first place is that I was already a positive thinker because of the way my brain works? Are ADD and hypomania physiological brain syndromes, part of a personality type or a mixture of virtues (ambition, productivity and creativity, being a Renaissance Man) and vices (flightiness, lack of discipline, hubris)?

Jim Clawson says

Everyone should read this to learn more about their family members and the people they deal with every day.

Katie says

What I really liked about this book was that it wasn't entirely impossible to read. Some articles and books are really dry and filled with terms that you may have to look up to understand, but this book was much more readable and easier to understand.

S. Thomas says

that Todd
