

Good Psych, Bad Psych: How to Tell the Difference

Joshua Thomas

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Good Psych, Bad Psych warns prospective patients to be critical of who is providing their care.

Joshua Thomas dispels misconceptions about the Australian health industry in *Good Psych, Bad Psych*, a self-help book concerned with the dangers of misguided psychotherapies.

Drawing on case studies from Thomas's work as a psychologist, the book asserts that bad psychological practice, or "bad psych," is rampant in Australian health care, which exacerbates incidences of mental illness. Each chapter is framed by a common misconception about psychology, with most dispelling the notion that every psychologist is certified to provide legitimate services and understands the practice.

The book outlines the blatant misuse of psychotherapies, as well as the overprescription of neuropathic medications like CBT and SSRIs, by stand-in psychologists, including parents, clinicians, social workers, and counselors. Thomas argues that better education, government regulation, and resource allocation could lessen the number of patients who receive bad treatment and counseling from third-party and "bad" psychologists. He is similarly adamant about demonstrating the attributes of a good psychologist: one who is knowledgeable, compassionate, and caring, but also blunt and honest.

In the course of Thomas's work, some therapies are denounced because of their lack of holistic treatment; the book's perspective is that medication, counseling, and creative therapy should work together. Graphics and models are present to illustrate such points, as are colorful metaphors: here, bad therapy is like bad toothpaste, worsening the very issues it is designed to treat. But the book is also dismissive of outside factors like capitalism and climate change when it comes to mental health influences; in some instances, its claims come to seem overly self-referential.

The book's tone is personalized and humorous, if sometimes to the point of being sardonic. Tongue-in-cheek phrasings—like calling certain therapies "cookie-cutter"—and the frequent utilization of direct audience addresses accompany its descriptive data, conveying deep frustration with the current system. The text also expresses sympathy for its case-study patients, as with one whose temporary anxiety became chronic after a series of bad mental health professionals encouraged her to separate from her family, rather than face their jealousy and anxiety.

Ultimately, too much of the book is devoted to arguing about the existence of bad psych, rather than to providing directed self-help methods for confronting it, though. Regardless, its information stands to be useful to those who are figuring out whether the psychological treatment they're pursuing is "good" or "bad." It attributes "bad psych" to general ignorance about the mental health industry, and asserts that psychology should be treated as an exclusive practice, like physical health, and that credentials should be respected. Knowledgeable patients and greater regulation, the book suggests in a compelling manner, could help to curb the proliferation of "bad psych."

Vital in filling a gap in research about how bad psychological practice harms patients, *Good Psych, Bad Psych* warns prospective patients to be critical of who is providing their care.

ALI ORTIZ (September 7, 2021)

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