



## Out of Order: Young Adult Manual of Mental Illness and Recovery

**Dale Carlson**

**Michael Bower**

**Carol Nicklaus, Illustrator**

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*Interplay of text and illustration prods readers to take responsibility for their own mental-health treatment.*

*Out of Order* is designed to help teenagers and young adults recognize the symptoms of mental illness and take responsibility for their own treatment, for, as the authors say, “No one can take your pills, do your therapy, or live the rest of your life for you.”

The first and largest of the book’s four segments discusses the general definition of mental illness. It delves into the various kinds of mental disorders—mood disorders, anxiety, sexual- and gender-identity disorders, as well as the gamut of addictions (from alcohol, drugs, and sex to TV, video games, and the Internet)—to which young people are prone. Readers are invited to self-test by answering questions relevant to specific disorders, but the author includes this important caveat: “Because we all have some of these mental disturbances from time to time, be mindful of the danger as you read this book of feeling or thinking you have every defect described.”

The book presents practical metaphors (“our brains are not made of cement,” and mental illness “is not like having a broken arm”), practical advice (ask a friend, counselor, or teacher to be your “mirror”), and some unusual but important facts (genius is also a mental aberration, so be careful about stereotyping odd behaviors). While outlining standard treatments and medications, the authors always come back to a central point: “The on-going task is to see our behavior and change it, which itself will rewire the brain.”

A compendium of information to help teens help themselves, *Out of Order* is presented in a way that will appeal to young minds. With large text, and sections broken into chapters with subheadings and bullet points, the information is readily accessible. The cartoon-style illustrations provided by Carol Nicklaus also help in this effort; they are expressive and thought provoking, but also informative when necessary.

*Out of Order: Young Adult Manual of Mental Illness and Recovery* prods readers to take an active role in their own treatment and to alter negative patterns. The book offers encouraging strategies for any young adults who may be silently suffering, along with inroads into understanding for parents as well.

BARBARA BAMBERGER SCOTT (Winter 2014)

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