

Book review

Stepping out of the Shadows

Insights into self-stigma and madness

Category: Book Reviews / Personal stories

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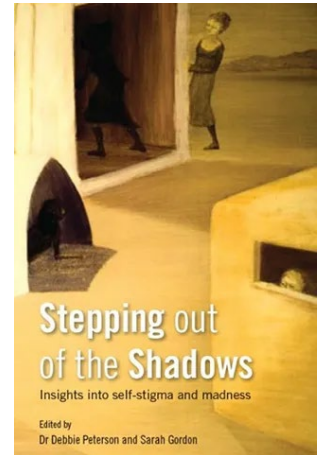
Year: 2009

Publisher: Case Consulting, NZ

ISBN: 9780473154325

Audience: Supporting Myself

Summary: Collection of essays, articles and personal stories about self-stigma associated with mental illness



This easy-to-read book is a collection of essays, articles and personal stories about self-stigma associated with mental illness. Each chapter explores the idea of self-stigma from the perspective of a person who has experienced mental illness, researched self-stigma, or both. This makes the book really compelling and super easy to read.

The introduction gives an overview of what self-stigma is and how self-stigma is part of a cycle that can be broken. The first chapter provides a more detailed description of self-stigma, which is broken down into easy-to-read subheadings. A short biography of all the authors is included, which provides a nice insight into each contributor. There is a great mix of stories from people from all walks of life.

This book is so accessible because it's not drowning in technical terms or jargon. It's not an academic textbook, even though some parts of it come from an academic perspective, which makes it easy to understand.

Moving personal accounts

I found some of the personal accounts of what it felt like to experience mental illness quite moving. They provided an incredible insight into something that is often such a private, personal experience. I developed a real admiration for the people who opened up about what they had been through and the obstacles and discrimination they overcame. The way in which some of the authors were treated after being admitted to hospital when they were experiencing mental unwellness was very shocking.

Editor Dr Debbie Peterson outlines key things to be taken away from reading the book. She hopes readers gain an understanding of the experience of self-stigma, the role self-stigma can play in the lives of people with experience of mental illness, how the effects of self-stigma differ from person to person, how interventions can work, and that for many people 'madness' is a valuable part of their life experience.

I think this book achieves those things and more and I would highly recommend it.

Reviewed by Maggie McNaughton,
writer at Healthy Communications