



Let's Talk Mental Illness

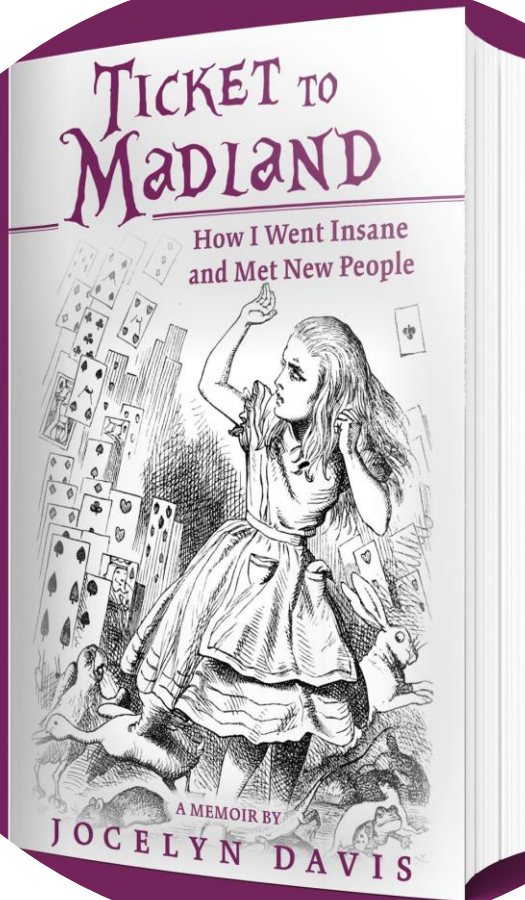
Stop the stigma • Normalize the conversation • Learn how to help

with Jocelyn Davis
author • leader • survivor



Agenda

- my journey to Madland (and back)
- 10 types of mental illness
- a false dichotomy that confuses us
- 3 fears that silence us
- how to help: 5 don'ts and 5 do's
- 4 shifts to make
- questions and discussion



My journey to Madland and back

a short reading

Spoiler! I recovered, thanks to ...

The right meds:

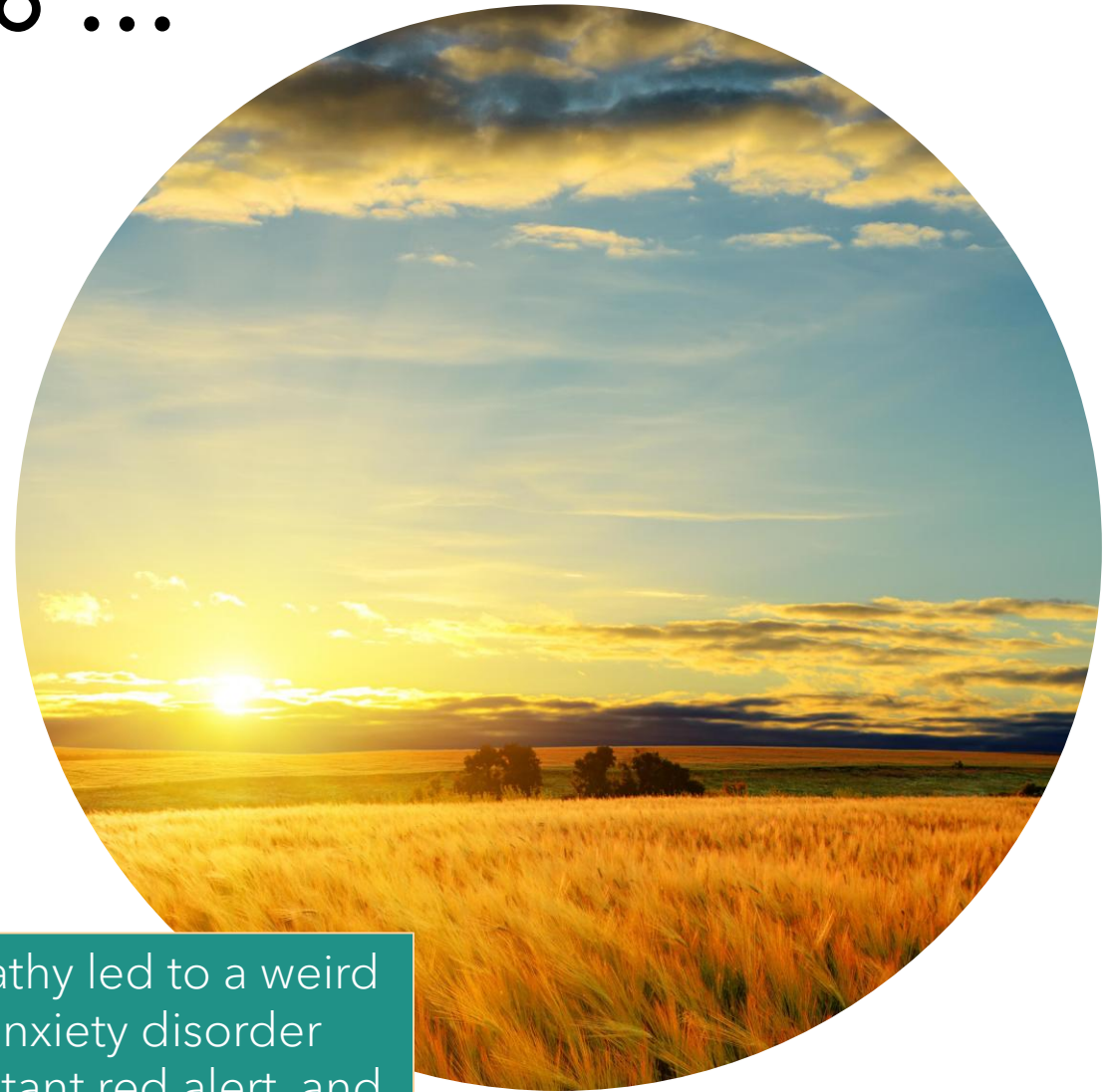
- a tranquilizer (18 months, tapering slowly)
- hormone replacement (forever)
- an SSRI antidepressant (probably forever)

Extreme rest: "In these cases," said my PCP, "you need to shut the brain down so it can rest and heal"

Help: one good husband, one good psychiatrist, and a few wonderful psychiatric nurses

Giving up: accepting that I alone could not fix it

What caused it? A perfect storm: Small-fiber neuropathy led to a weird type of chronic vertigo, which stirred up a longtime anxiety disorder amplified by perimenopause. My brain went on constant red alert, and Covid (I think) tipped it over the edge.



“But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.

*“Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat;
“we’re all mad here.”*

20-25% of us will face a mental illness at some point(s) in our lifetime



10 types of mental illness

| DYSPHORIC | DESTABILIZED | DETACHED |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Depression | Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) | Schizophrenia |
| Anxiety disorders | Substance use disorder | Delusional and dissociative disorders |
| Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) | Borderline personality disorder | |
| Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) | Bipolar disorder | |

Other Disorders Often Put in the "Mental Health" Bucket

- Developmental/learning disorders, e.g., autism, dyslexia, intellectual disabilities
- "Dark triad" personality disorders: sociopathy/psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism
- Neurological diseases with biomarkers, e.g., dementia, multiple sclerosis, seizure disorders

A false dichotomy: brain or mind



Brain disorders (like bipolarism)

"Physical"

"Organic causes"

"Real"

"Severe, incurable; live with it"

"Treat with meds"

Mind disorders (like depression)

"Psychological"

"Caused by trauma or stress"

"In your head"

"Like a bad mood; get over it"

"Treat with talk therapy"

REALITY

brain and mind are inseparable

3 fears that silence us

- Fear of the unknown ("Don't go there!")
- Fear of contagion ("What if I catch it?")
- Fear of making it worse ("What if I say the wrong thing?")



How to help: DON'T ...

1. Treat mental disorders like a **low mood** or **lack of effort** ("Feeling down, huh?" "Try cutting out sugar." "Snap out of it!")
2. Assume **stress** or **trauma** is the sole cause ("The body keeps the score." "It's your high-pressure job." "Gotta unpack your trauma.")
3. Equate **medication** with failure ("Doctors just push pills." "Everyone is overmedicated." "I'd never take those drugs.")
4. Use **euphemisms** or **false cheer** ("behavioral health" "mental health challenges" "Neurodivergence is your superpower!")
5. Think you can **fix it with empathy** ("Let's have lunch." "If there's anything I can do ..." "Please talk to me!")

How to help: DO ...

1. Recognize that a person with mental illness is **really and truly sick**—even if lab tests say “there’s nothing wrong”
2. Think of brain/mind disease like **lung or heart disease**—requiring medical, environmental, and emotional support
3. Realize that even severe, chronic mental illness is **rarely the end of the line** and (though maybe not curable) **nearly always treatable**
4. Support the person’s efforts to get **medical treatment**, including sitting with them through hospital intake if necessary
5. **Just be there:** reach out, acknowledge their suffering, listen, be curious, be a witness. And **say anything!**

We can help shift the conversation

FROM

Shame

Fear

Pity

Helplessness



TO

Candor

Curiosity

Support

Hope

Join us!



Jocelyn Davis and Dr. Kelly Kinnebrew are building mental health literacy and leadership in the working world

Learn more at mindfalls.org

View and subscribe to our newsletter at <https://mindfalls.beehiiv.com>

Stay in touch for news on our next book, *The Unbroken Mind* (anticipated in 2027)

Thank you!

Learn about my books at JocelynRDavis.com

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*Ticket to Madland: How I Went Insane and
Met New People* is available wherever books
are sold

