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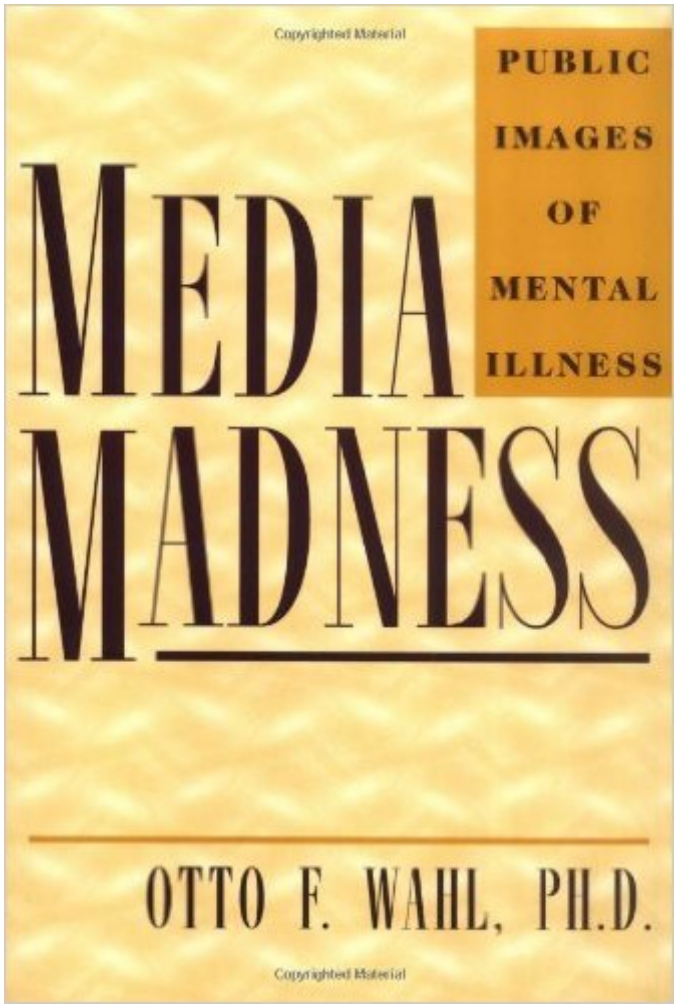
Media Madness: Public Images Of Mental Illness



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Synopsis

Winner of the 1996 Gustavus Myers Award for an Outstanding Book on Human Rights in North America "Media Madness is a most timely, readable, and useful book, exposing, as it does, the myths about mental illness that most of us live by--myths that are as destructive as they are pervasive. Wahl is especially good at showing, in detail, the many ways in which false views of mental illness, purveyed in the media, shape the ways even the most enlightened of us view the world around us. A most thoughtful, stimulating book, from which I learned a great deal." --Jay Neugeboren, author of Imagining Robert: My Brother, Madness, and Survival--A Memoir "An outstanding book . . . well-researched . . . it is 'must reading.'" --Laurie Flynn, former executive director, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill "The rampant inaccuracies about mental illnesses in newspapers, magazines, movies, and books make it clear that this is not merely stereotyping, but rather a pervasive ignorance. Dr. Wahl's book goes far to explain where the errors are and to educate and sensitize the reader to frequent inaccuracies. In addition, the book is very readable." --NAMI Advocate "What do the media have to do with one's perception of mental illness? Wahl takes an in-depth look a how unfavorable public images of mental illness are often inaccurate. Statistics show that one out of every five people in the U.S. will experience a psychiatric illness. With boldness and sensitivity, Wahl takes a powerful look at the inaccurate stereotypes created by the media."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Media Madness presents years of research to demonstrate that the mass media predominately portray people with mental illness as violent, frightening or ridiculous. Throughout the book he presents those images based on hard facts, and at each step he carefully sets the record straight on the correct use of words, images and psychological terminology. I was employed as a working journalist for 20 years before becoming the public relations person for a large social service agency. Gradually, I began to see the stigma created for people with mental illness by these inaccurate, biased and sometimes mean statements and images. "The stigma is worse than the disease," is a common refrain among people with mental illness. These are people who hold responsible jobs, have friends and families and pay taxes. But they don't tell anyone about their illness because they are afraid of behing classified with the negative images of mental illness perpetrated by the news media. They keep quiet. Millions of them. They live with a secret and it takes an emotional and psychological toll. They tell me they feel like they are "acting" in life because they cannot reveal the facts about their mental illness. The words, images and downright inaccuracies we read or see in the mass media are creating tension and misery in the lives of millions of Americans. Today, we would not use the terms "nigger", "gimp" or "girlie" for Black people, people with disabilities or women. But we tolerate the use of "psycho," "nut case" or "loonie.

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