



Glossary of Terms

abuse: the illegal, improper or harmful use of something.

acute toxic overdose: an overdose of a drug, including a medication prescribed in excess dosages, that creates a severe poisoning of the body. *Toxic* refers to poisoning.

addictive: said of a drug that creates a state of physical or mental dependence.

adrenaline: a hormone secreted by the inner part of the adrenal glands that speeds up the heartbeat and thereby increases bodily energy and resistance to fatigue.

akathisia: an inability to keep still. From *a-* meaning “without,” and *kathisia* meaning “sitting.”

algorithm: a formal procedure for solving a mathematical or other problem. In the case of psychotropic drugs, it designates a procedure developed by pharmaceutical companies for determining which drugs to prescribe for a “mental disorder.”

Alzheimer’s disease: a deteriorating brain disease that is the most common form of dementia (memory loss). It usually starts in late middle age or in old age as memory loss of recent events that spreads to more distant memories.

amino acids: substances the body uses to make proteins that make up living matter and are vital for the body to function.

amphetamines: any group of powerful drugs, called stimulants, that act on the central nervous system (the brain and the spinal cord) to increase heart rate and blood pressure and reduce fatigue.

antidepressant: a drug that affects mood. Psychiatry’s first antidepressants were introduced in the 1950s, while newer antidepressants were introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

antidepressant discontinuation syndrome: another word for “withdrawal” when referring to the effects of an antidepressant causing addiction or dependence. Pharmaceutical companies concerned about the negative aspects of withdrawal renamed it “antidepressant discontinuation syndrome.”



antipsychotic: a class of drugs also known as major tranquilizers, antischizophrenic drugs and neuroleptic drugs which are supposed to control “symptoms of psychosis,” such as hallucinations or delusions. Thorazine is an antipsychotic. Antipsychotics newly on the market such as Zyprexa, are called “atypicals” (new).

anxiety: uneasy thoughts or fears about what may happen; troubled, worried or uneasy feelings.

attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): a psychiatric classification. From *attention*: ability to take notice; *deficit*: a lack of; *hyper-*: more than normal; *activity*: being lively, active; *disorder*: a condition that has no physical basis. The “disorder” is characterized by a supposed inability to sit still, focus attention or control impulses and the diagnosis relies upon observed symptoms. For ADHD, these include: has too little attention, is too active, fidgets, squirms, fails to complete homework or chores, climbs around or talks excessively, loses pencils or toys and interrupts others.

atypical: new, not typical, not like the usual or normal type. An atypical drug could be a new antidepressant or antipsychotic as opposed to older ones of the same class. The term *atypical* was used to market newer drugs as having fewer side effects than similar older drugs. Thorazine is a typical antipsychotic; Zyprexa is an atypical. Elavil or Remeron are typical antidepressants; Prozac and Zoloft are atypicals.

anxiolytics: another name for minor tranquilizers, antianxiety drugs and benzodiazepines.

barbiturate (barbituric acid): an acid used as the basis for many highly addictive sedatives and hypnotics (used to sedate or chemically restrain someone). Sodium amytal is a barbiturate.

benzodiazepines: part of a class of sedative-hypnotic drugs that depress the nervous system and known also as anxiolytics, minor tranquilizers, antianxiety drugs, sleeping pills and “benzos.” Examples are Valium, Ativan and Xanax. Not all antianxiety drugs are benzodiazepines.

biochemical imbalance: in general medicine, biochemical imbalances can exist. For example, diabetes is a disease in which the body produces little or no insulin, a hormone that helps the body’s tissues absorb glucose (sugar) so it can be used as a source of energy. In people with diabetes, glucose levels build up in the blood and urine, causing many physical problems. That build up can be physically detected and the imbalance rectified by adding insulin to the body. In psychiatry, the term refers to a theory that chemical imbalances in the brain account for mental disorders. No X-ray, brain scan, blood, urine or other test exists to confirm any mental or behavioral disorder.

bioethicist: one who studies or has a degree in bioethics.



- bioethics:** the study of the ethical and moral implications of new biological discoveries and advances, as in the fields of genetic engineering (scientific alteration of genes) and drug research.
- biological psychiatry:** a term used to describe the psychiatric theory and practice of viewing mental disorders as physical—caused by the brain or a chemical imbalance—a condition for which a psychotropic drug is prescribed. From *biology*: the science of living things; the study of plant and animal life.
- biopsy:** the surgical removal of a piece of tissue from a living body for examination and diagnosis.
- bipolar disorder:** a psychiatric classification categorized under “mood disorders” and characterized by alternating episodes of depression and mania or by episodes of depression and “mild nonpsychotic excitement”—thus, two poles—“bipolar.” Also known as bipolar affective disorder, manic-depression, and manic-depressive psychosis—basically “ups and downs.”
- black box:** In the US, a black box warning (also sometimes called black label warning or boxed warning) is a warning that appears on the package insert of prescription drugs when medical studies indicate that the drug carries a significant risk of serious or even life-threatening effects.
- blood vessel:** any of the vessels, such as arteries, veins or capillaries (join the ends of the artery to the beginning of the vein) that transport blood through the body.
- body chemistry:** all of the elements that make up the body as well as its various reactions.
- brain:** a physical organ inside the head that sends and receives messages through the nervous system; for example, it tells the body when something is hot and warns against touching it. The brain translates thought into action and coordinates energy.
- cardiac arrhythmia:** an irregularity in the normal rhythm of the heartbeat. *Cardiac* relates to or affects the heart.
- cardiovascular:** related to both the heart and the blood vessels.
- CAT scan:** a computerized x-ray scan that constructs an image of the body structure. A series of detailed pictures are taken of areas or organs inside the body from different angles. The procedure assists in diagnosing physical disease or abnormalities.
- cell:** an extremely small, basic unit of living matter of which all plants, animals and human bodies are made.
- central nervous system:** *see nervous system.*
- cerebral:** having to do with the brain.
- chemical imbalance:** *see biochemical imbalance.*



cleft lip: a birth defect characterized by one or more clefts (splits) in the upper lip.

cocainum muriaticum: cocaine.

cognitive impairment: impaired thinking or perception.

coma: unconsciousness caused by disease, injury or poison, a prolonged state of deep unconsciousness.

comatose: relating to or affected with a coma or unconsciousness.

controlled release medication: medications that are made to gradually release a drug into the body over a 12- to 24-hour period to provide a consistent supply of the drug to the system.

dam up: obstruct, block or impede.

delirium: a state marked by extreme restlessness, confusion and sometimes hallucinations, caused by fever, poisoning or brain injury.

delusions: false beliefs about oneself or the situation one is in.

dementia: a condition of deteriorated mental capacity that is characterized by confusion, memory loss and disorientation—a marked decline from the individual’s former intellectual level, resulting in emotional apathy.

dependence: a physical or mental “need” to use a drug or substance regularly, despite the fact that it is likely to have a damaging effect.

depressants: drugs often referred to as central nervous system depressants, that slow down brain function. They include sedatives and tranquilizers.

depression: a mental condition or set of symptoms characterized by gloom or sadness.

desensitization: the act of reducing the reaction of the senses (touch, sight, smell, perception, etc.).

diabetes: a disease in which a person’s system cannot properly absorb normal amounts of glucose (sugar) and starch because the pancreas fails to secrete enough insulin. In people with diabetes, the resulting buildup of glucose levels causes many physical problems.

diagnosis: the act or process of finding out what disease a person has by examination and careful study of the symptoms.

disease mongering: to *monger* is to sell or traffic in something. Here it refers to marketing diseases in order to sell drugs. In psychiatry, it is the effort by psychiatrists and pharmaceutical companies to enlarge the market for the treatment of “mental disorders” by convincing people that they are sick and in need of a psychotropic drug. For example, marketing shyness as a serious “disease” to sell antidepressants to “treat” it.



disorder: an abnormal condition. In medicine, strict standards exist for calling a condition a *disease*. In addition to a group of symptoms, the *cause* of the symptoms or some understanding of their physiology (functions and activities) *should* be established. A “fever” is not a disease but a symptom of an illness. In the *absence* of a known cause or physiology, a group of symptoms seen repeatedly in many different patients is called a *syndrome*, sometimes referred to as “disorder.” In psychiatry, their diagnoses are called disorders because none of them are established diseases.

dopamine: a hormone (chemical substance) that is essential to the normal nerve activity of the brain. An inadequate supply of dopamine plays a key role in the tremors experienced by patients with Parkinson’s disease (a chronic nervous disease, characterized by tremors and weakness, muscular rigidity and an inability to walk properly). Antipsychotic drugs lower dopamine production by the body, thus causing Parkinson’s-type reactions. Newer antidepressants can also lower dopamine production.

drug: a substance (other than food) that, when taken into the body, has a marked physiological effect. If the change helps the body, the drug is a medicine; if the change harms the body, the drug is a poison.

DSM: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The American Psychiatric Association publishes the DSM to provide a listing of so-called mental disorders based on symptoms or behaviors. Psychiatrists vote on what new disorders to add and what disorders to revise or remove. It is used primarily to obtain insurance reimbursement for patient treatment. There is also an international manual, *The International Classification of Diseases*, which includes a section on mental disorders.

dysphoric: a state of feeling acutely hopeless, uncomfortable and unhappy.

essential fatty acids: (EFAs) are fats that are essential to the diet because the body cannot produce them. EFAs are extremely important nutrients for health. They are present in every healthy cell in the body and are critical for the normal growth of the cells, muscles, nerves and organs.

extended release: a drug that releases itself into the body slowly so that it can be taken less often.

false positive: a result that is erroneously positive when the condition it is testing for does not actually exist. An example of a false positive: a particular test designed to detect cancer of the lung is positive, but the person does not have lung cancer. The positive result was caused by other factors that are not related to the disease.

FDA: US Food and Drug Administration—the government agency that regulates all food, drug and medical devices in the United States and is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that approved medicines work and are safe for consumers.



foster child: A child in the temporary care of substitute parents. Foster care is supervised by governmental or charitable agencies. Foster care is different from adoptive care, where children become permanent members of a family.

fraud: intentional deception resulting in injury to another. Fraud usually consists of deliberately deceiving someone for the purpose of making an unfair or unlawful gain.

front group: a group that serves as a cover or disguise for some other activity, especially of a secretive or disreputable nature.

gateway drug: a drug or medicine that, when taken, can lead to the use of other drugs that are addictive.

gene: a basic unit in the body that influences the inheritance and development of some physical character such as hair and eye color. Each person has thousands of genes that determine individual physical characteristics.

genetic engineering: scientific alteration of genes to produce desirable new traits or to eliminate undesirable ones.

humors: any one of the body fluids formerly supposed to determine a person's health and temperament. The four fluids were blood, phlegm, yellow bile (irritability) and black bile (melancholy).

hyperactive: in psychiatry, a reference to a child's behavior in which movements and actions are considered to be performed at a higher-than-normal rate of speed, or a reference to a child who is constantly restless and in motion.

hyperkinesis: excessive muscular movement; spasm.

hyperkinetic: having to do with, or caused by, hyperkinesis; characterized by hyperactivity. Also refers to the person experiencing the condition.

impaired judgment: *impair* means to lessen the quality, strength or effectiveness of something and *judgment* is the ability to form sound opinions and make sensible decisions or reliable guesses. Someone with impaired judgment has lost this ability to some degree. Some psychotropic drugs, such as benzodiazepines, come with a warning not to drive or operate machinery because they can impair judgment.

irreversible: impossible to reverse or undo. Some psychotropic drugs cause irreversible damage to the nervous system.

lability: instability.

malignant: very dangerous; causing or threatening to cause death.

manic-depression: a condition characterized by alternating bouts of excitement and depression—"ups and downs." More often called "bipolar disorder."

MAOIs: an older type of antidepressant called Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors. *Monoamine oxidase* is an enzyme (protein substance produced in living cells) that has the function



of getting rid of *used* neurotransmitters found between nerve cells. It was believed but *never* proven that low levels of neurotransmitters caused depression and that if an antidepressant blocked the activity of this enzyme, there would be higher levels of neurotransmitters to counteract the depression. Antidepressants were marketed as being able to alter such enzyme activity.

metabolism: the process by which all living things turn food into energy and living tissue. In this process food is broken down to produce energy that the body uses to build new cells and tissue.

methamphetamine: an illegal, man-made synthetic drug in the same class as cocaine and other street drugs.

methylphenidate: a central nervous system stimulant; the chemical name for Ritalin, Concerta, Metadate and Methylin.

mood swings: sudden and extreme changes in a person's emotional state. Symptoms can include sadness, hopelessness and worthlessness and changes in appetite, sleep patterns and energy level.

morbid: unhealthy, not wholesome, sickly.

motor retardation: *motor* means of, pertaining to or involving muscular movement. Motor retardation is a reference to developmental delays, such as when a child does not reach stages of expected growth, such as weight, ability to focus or speak.

MRI: magnetic resonance imaging, a scan that produces images of internal body tissue and is used to also monitor body chemistry, as blood flow. The procedure assists in diagnosing physical disease or abnormalities.

narcissism: excessive self-admiration or self-centeredness.

narcotic: a drug that affects the central nervous system causing dizziness, euphoria, lack of coordination and unconsciousness. *Narcotic* also refers to drugs that are abused as street drugs and can cause either physical or psychological dependence. Opium and amphetamines are narcotics.

naturopathy: a system of therapy in which natural remedies are used instead of drugs or surgery.

nerve cells: cells that are part of the nervous system and send messages to and from the brain. For example, information transferred along nerve cells gives you a sense of touch in your fingertips.

nerve ending: nerve endings are the millions of points on the surface of the body and inside it that send messages to the brain, causing people to feel sensations such as heat, cold and pain. Fingertips have a large number of nerve endings.



nervous system: all the nerves in the body together with the brain and spinal cord. It is also referred to as the central nervous system (CNS). Some psychotropic drugs are called CNS medications.

neural: pertaining to a nerve or nerves.

neuroleptic: *neuroleptic* means “nerve-seizing.” French psychiatrists Pierre Deniker and Jean Delay invented the term in 1955 to describe the effects of antipsychotic drugs. Most antipsychotic drugs are called neuroleptics. Neuroleptic drugs are also classed as phenothiazines (meaning tranquilizing effect) or major tranquilizers. Thorazine and Seroquel are both neuroleptics.

neuroleptic malignant syndrome: a potentially fatal toxic reaction from neuroleptic drugs characterized by high fever, rapid heartbeat and rigid muscles. *Malignant* means life-threatening.

neuron: see nerve cell.

neurotransmitters: chemical substances that transmit nerve impulses between a neuron and another muscle or organ tissue.

norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibitor (NDRI): norepinephrine and dopamine are brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. Psychiatrists believe that low levels of neurotransmitters may cause depression or affect mood and emotions. Norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibitors are a type of antidepressant that increases the levels of both norepinephrine and dopamine by inhibiting their reabsorption (reuptake) into cells.

obsessive-compulsive disorder: a psychiatric term that falls under the classification of “anxiety disorders” to describe a person beset with obsessions or compulsions or both and suffers anxiety or stress because of them.

panacea: a cure-all; the one remedy for all diseases; a solution for all problems and difficulties.

pancreatitis: inflammation of the *pancreas*, a gland near the stomach that helps digestion.

Pandora’s box: a box containing all human ills (Greek mythology); a source of many troubles.

paranoid: a chronic form of behavior characterized by extreme suspiciousness, elaborate delusions or delusions of persecution.

parkinsonism/Parkinson’s disease: a chronic nervous disease characterized by muscular tremors and weakness, a tendency to walk in a peculiar manner, and a fixed facial expression.



patent: a government grant which gives a person or company the sole rights to make, use, or sell a new invention for a certain number of years.

PET brain scan: a *positron emission tomography* brain scan is a method of taking an image of the brain—used to detect tumors and damaged tissue, measure metabolism and view blood flow.

pharmaceutical: of or relating to pharmacy or pharmacists. A pharmaceutical product or preparation.

pharmacy: practice of compounding and dispensing drugs and providing drug-related information to consumers; also the place where such medicinal products are prepared. Pharmacy is an area of *materia medica*, that branch of medical science concerning the sources, nature, properties, and preparation of drugs.

phenothiazines: heavy tranquilizing drugs used to treat schizophrenia; also called neuroleptics, antipsychotics or major tranquilizers. Also a yellowish crystalline compound used in making dyes, as an insecticide and for deworming cattle and sheep.

placebo: a harmless, unmedicated substance (like a sugar pill or distilled water) given to a patient merely to humor him, or to use as a control in the testing of another medicated substance. The “placebo effect” describes a phenomena in which the placebo can improve a patient’s condition simply because the person has the expectation that it will be helpful. The more the person believes they are going to benefit from a treatment, the more likely they will.

polypharmacy: the act or practice of prescribing two or more drugs or medicines together, usually to treat a single disease or condition, often in dangerous combinations or dosage levels. Also, a prescription made up of many medicines or ingredients.

postnatal: existing or happening after birth.

post traumatic stress disorder: a psychiatric term used to describe a reaction that occurs after experiencing a highly stressful or violent event. Psychiatrists first used this to define soldiers’ adverse response to fighting in the Vietnam War. Experts argue that normal responses to catastrophic events have been redefined as mental disease.

premenstrual dysphoria disorder: A psychiatric classification (PMMD) for the feelings of general hopelessness, unhappiness and discomfort that some women experience before their menstruation period.

prenatal: existing or happening during pregnancy but before childbirth.

psychiatry: means “doctoring of the soul,” but psychiatrists long ago dispensed with the soul and began theorizing that human behavior derived from the brain—a theory they have not yet proved in more than 200 years. The study and treatment of “mental diseases” through physical procedures such as drugs, psychosurgery and



shock treatments of various kinds. As medical doctors, psychiatrists can prescribe drugs, whereas psychologists cannot, although there are plans underway to allow psychologists to prescribe drugs too.

psychoactive: describes drugs or medications that have a significant effect on mood or behavior.

psychosis: a serious mental disorder (as in schizophrenia) characterized by defective or lost contact with reality, often with hallucinations or delusions.

psychostimulant: a drug that affects the central nervous system and increases mental or physical activity. The term *psychostimulant* is used to describe a class of stimulants used to treat a mental disorder. *See also stimulant.*

psychotropic: mind-altering; drugs with an effect on mental function, behavior or experience. LSD, peyote and mescaline are among this category of drugs, as are Thorazine, Prozac and Xanax.

recompense: payment for loss or injury.

respiratory failure: *respiratory* means relating to or used in breathing or the system in the body that takes in and distributes oxygen. Therefore a respiratory failure is a lessening or breakdown of the ability to take oxygen into the body.

reuptake: to use up, reabsorb. Chemical messengers in the body, called neurotransmitters, are released by one nerve cell and absorbed by other nerve cells, muscles and organ tissue. The neurotransmitters that are not taken up by other nerves and so on, are taken up (reabsorbed) by the same nerve cell that released them. The process is called reuptake. Some antidepressants and antipsychotics are said to work by inhibiting the reabsorption of the chemicals, so that more of the chemical is available to be picked up by other nerves. This supposedly increases the level of the chemical to influence a mood or emotion. To date, no scientific evidence exists to support this theory.

revolving door: an entrance door of an apartment or building consisting of four rigid upright sections, rotating around a central shaft. Informally, it refers to people who go from corporate jobs into government or public service and then return to their corporate positions at a higher level, only to repeat the cycle over and over.

schizophrenia: A broad psychiatric term to describe a variety of mental disturbances—covering everything from odd behavior and disorganized thinking, to extreme shyness. The term *schizophrenia* comes from Greek words meaning “split mind” and was coined by a German psychiatrist in the late 1800s to describe asylum patients suffering from the then-unknown virus, *encephalitis lethargica* (a brain inflammation causing lethargy). Psychiatrists, however, kept the well-publicized term, quietly dropping the physical symptoms, because the concept of schizophrenia as a mental condition with wide-ranging mental symptoms (hallucinations, delusions, bizarre thoughts, etc.) was important to



psychiatry's claims of legitimacy. There remains today, however, a complete absence of objective proof to substantiate its existence as a physical brain abnormality. As stated in psychiatry's own diagnostic manual, psychiatrists "could not establish agreement about what this disorder is," and "could only agree on what to call it."

sedative hypnotics: a class of drugs that depress the activity of the central nervous system, often prescribed to treat anxiety and induce sleep. Barbiturates or minor tranquilizers (antianxiety drugs) are examples of sedative hypnotics.

seizure: a sudden condition during which a person cannot control the movements of the body and which continues for a short time.

selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs): a term used for certain antidepressants. It is claimed that these antidepressants correct a chemical imbalance in the brain that causes depression. *See also* **biochemical imbalance, serotonin** and **reuptake**.

serotonin: a substance that is mostly found in the gastrointestinal (digestive) tract, where it modulates the rhythmic movements kneading food through the stomach. In the cardiovascular (heart) system, *serotonin* helps regulate blood vessels to control the flow of blood. It also plays an important role in blood clotting and is used in the reproductive system. Only about 5 percent of it is found in the brain.

Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI): Similar in concept to an SSRI drug, an SNRI is supposed to correct a "chemical imbalance" in the brain that psychiatrists say causes mental disturbances. *Norepinephrine* is a neurotransmitter—a hormone that is secreted by the adrenal gland, affecting blood pressure, rate and depth of breathing, blood sugar levels, etc.

somnolence: sleepiness; drowsiness (a side effect of some drugs).

SSRIs: *see* **selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors**.

stimulant: a food, drug, medicine, etc., that temporarily increases the activity of the body or some part of the body or central nervous system. Bensedrine, Ritalin and cocaine are examples of a stimulant.

streptococcal infection: also known as strep infection; bacterial infection.

stroke: a sudden blockage or rupture (the breakage of something) of a blood vessel in the brain resulting in loss of consciousness, partial loss of movement or loss of speech.

synapse: A gap between nerve endings. A junction between two nerve cells, where nerve signals are transmitted. Drugs affect the nature of the transmission (increasing or reducing it) and so affects body (and brain) function.

syndrome: a group of signs and symptoms that, when they occur together, represent an abnormality or type of behavior.



tardive dyskinesia: a common result of the use of antipsychotics. *Tardive* means “late” and *dyskinesia* means “abnormal movement of muscles.” The muscles of the face and body contort and spasm involuntarily, drawing the face into a scowl or grimace and twisting the body into contortions. Created by the drug damaging the nervous system, it is often irreversible.

tardive dystonia: a permanent condition caused by psychiatric drugs that causes the body to contort and spasm involuntarily. Dystonia means disturbance of muscle tone.

tetracyclics: an early form of antidepressant. (*Tetra*-means four.) The name derives from the drug’s four-ring-like structure in a T-shape.

thyroid: a gland that wraps around the windpipe and produces hormones that influence every organ, tissue and cell in the body. It controls heart rate, body weight, body temperature, energy level and muscle strength.

tolerance: the capacity of the body to endure or become less responsive to a drug or substance thereby requiring higher doses of the drug for its effect.

toxic: relating to or containing a poison.

toxic psychosis: a psychosis generated by toxins, such as drugs, which act as a poison in the body.

tranquilizer: a drug that is used to depress the activity of the central nervous system. There are major tranquilizers (also called antipsychotics) and minor tranquilizers (also called anti-anxiety drugs, anxiolytics or benzodiazepines).

tricyclics: an older form of antidepressant introduced in 1958, the name refers to the three rings in the chemical structure of the drugs. Tofranil was the first tricyclic antidepressant.

VNS therapy: a psychiatric procedure in which an electronic stimulation device (vagus nerve stimulator) is surgically implanted around the vagus nerve (nerve stretching from the brain to the heart, lungs and other organs) in the patient’s neck, connected to a pacemaker implanted in his chest and programmed to produce electrical stimuli in the brain.

withdrawal: the unpleasant physical and emotional reactions felt when coming off a drug. These can range from mild discomfort to intense pain and seizures, depending on the drug. Avoiding this pain is one reason why addicts or people who have taken psychotropic drugs for long periods don’t come off the drugs even when they want to quit.