

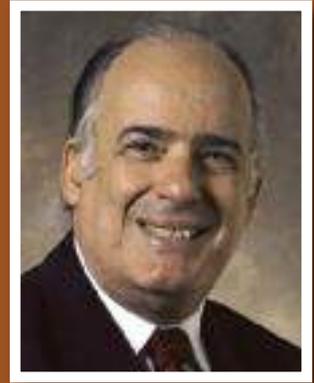


BETHANY E HALBREICH

Applied Creativity in Mental Health

Know the Box, Think Outside it

By Bethany E Halbreich and
Professor Uriel Halbreich



PROF. URIEL HALBREICH

Creativity and innovation. It is almost conventional to trumpet their importance, their utmost necessity for progress. However, applying creativity in the actual world necessitates creativity.

Applied creativity in Mental Health is a process involving several stages. It starts from a mundane knowledge. What are the current concepts? How are they pertinent to the individual patient seeking our help? Specifically, what criteria does the patient meet? What treatments are recommended by the guidelines?

The next step is understanding. How and why did the authoritative experts construct the diagnostic criteria and treatment guidelines that are considered as evidence-based and good practice?

Understanding is a thinking process that might lead to questions. For example, are symptoms and complaints of a white bank employee in Manhattan or a middle class suburbanite homemaker in Sydney representative of feelings and concerns of a homeless teenager in a slum of Mumbai?

What is the impact of culture, day-to-day life, social structure and individual's social standing, economy and the individual's financial resources, the individual's beliefs and state of content – on the individual's state of well-being? We assume that the biology is the same, but everything else is diversified.

Theory simplifies matter. As psychiatrists, we all know the rules of the game. We are familiar with the influential American DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – 5th Edition) and the World Health Organization (WHO), ICD-10-11 (International Classification of Disorders). We know and can describe all the definitions and criteria of all Disorders. We can authoritatively describe a person as “not meeting criteria for any ICD nor DSM definitions.

But what is “healthy”?

The Academics and Thought Leaders among us have been writing scores of articles and books about the Biological – Psychological – Social aspects of psychiatry. Presumably, we all know our domain. We all know its magnitude. According to the WHO, the Public Health, and the economic impact of Mental Disorders are *huge*. They top the list.

The Global Public Interest is to reduce the magnitude of Mental Disorders and their impact. This is beyond the ethical responsibility of reducing individual suffering. This is for the sake of Society – each and every Society.

Reducing the size of “the box of mental suffering” requires thinking outside the current box.

The next step is doubt, not taking anything for granted, open-mindedness, tolerance to “crazy” ideas, mental and organizational flexibility, and acceptance of possible change as well as ability to depart from the conventional and explore new possibilities.

Creativity and innovation *must* replace conventionality.

So, why is it important? What is creativity and how can we affectively and efficiently apply it in Mental Health?

IBM conducted a survey of more than 1500 CEO's from 60 countries and 33 industries and found that creativity is valued as the most important skill for the modern world.

It is of interest that The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking found that since 1990, creative thinking skills have been in sharp decline. Although creativity was not intentionally cultivated in the majority of school children studied, the correlation of lifetime accomplishment was more than three times stronger for children who thought creatively (as a result of cultivated opportunity for creativity), than for children with a high IQ.

In “Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and Invention,” Csikszentmihalyi writes that “creativity does not happen inside people's heads, but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural context. It is systematic rather than an individual phenomenon.” □

—Bethany Halbreich is a Creativity and Innovation Consultant for PepsiCo, a TED Resident, and the Founder and CEO of Paint the World, an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to accelerating the world's creative capacity.

—Professor Uriel Halbreich is Currently Professor of Psychiatry and Director of BioBehavioral Research at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo NY, USA. He is Chair of The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) Section on Interdisciplinary Collaboration.