



Reviewed by: Monica Spafford

Following decades of asylums, an overreliance on medication, and treatments like ECT, where popular opinion was that individuals with mental illness had to be locked up and medicated, it is no surprise that professionals in the mental health field have become more and more wary of pharmacological treatments. Additionally, because of growing knowledge about mental illness many mental health professionals recognize that medication is not a “quick fix” to mental illness. However, because of the horrors of the past and a societal tendency to devalue mental illness, popular opinion has shifted from one extreme, an overreliance on medication, to the opposite extreme, denying its usefulness altogether. In *Ordinarily Well: The Case for Antidepressants*, psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer works to defend the integrity of antidepressant medications in a world that has come to deny their validity.

Many studies prove that a combination of antidepressant medication and therapy is the most successful form of treatment for individuals with depression. Medication and talk-therapy seem to complement each other and are less successful treatments when utilized in isolation. Kramer points out that antidepressants are not miracle cures, rather they are useful tools to help individuals heal and function from day-to-day. Furthermore, he suggests that antidepressant medication can be useful for certain individuals and should be administered on a case-by-case basis.

Inspired by personal experience and enraged by news that makes overarching claims like drugs are no more useful than placebos or antidepressant drugs are only useful for treating severe depression, Kramer works to debunk these sweeping claims. He outlines the controversy surrounding antidepressants and applies a new lens, utilizing research and observations of his own patients to support his claim that health professionals should not discount the usefulness of antidepressants because by doing so they are disadvantaging their patients. Subsequently, the question then becomes, when to prescribe and when not to

prescribe.

Kramer's book reads like an ode to antidepressants but the breadth of evidence in his book cannot be ignored and will have even the most skeptical mental health professionals eager to turn the page.

Peter Kramer is the bestselling author of *Listening to Prozac* amongst other publications. He is a psychiatrist, writer, and a professor at Brown Medical School. He has also been published in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Monica Spafford studies Applied Psychology at New York University and is set to graduate in May of 2018. She is a Research Assistant for the INSIGHTS into Children's Temperament research study at NYU's Institute of Human Development and Social Change testing the efficacy of the INSIGHTS program, an evidence-based intervention that works to support children's social-emotional development and academic learning. In addition to working for Somatic Psychotherapy Today, she also writes reviews for the *International Journal of Psychotherapy*.



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