

Recovering Sanity: A Compassionate Approach to Understanding and Treating Psychosis

Edward M. Podvoll, M.D., 2003

(Formerly published as *The Seduction of Madness*)

Recovering Sanity is a compassionately written examination of the experience of psychosis and related mental illnesses. By presenting four in-depth profiles of illness and recovery, Dr. Edward Podvoll reveals the brilliance and chaos of the psychotic mind and demonstrates its potential for recovery outside of traditional institutional settings.

Dr. Podvoll counters the conventional thinking that the millions of Americans suffering from psychosis can never fully recover. He offers a bold new approach to treatment that involves home care with a specially trained team of practitioners. Using "basic attendance", a treatment technique inspired by the author's study of Buddhist psychology, healthcare professionals can use the tools of compassion and awareness to help patients recover their underlying sanity. Originally published as *The Seduction of Madness*, this reissue includes new introductory material and two new appendices.

Praise for Recovering Sanity

(Click on each name to read full quotation)

[Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche](#), author of *Wild Awakening*

[Mark Vonnegut](#), author of *The Eden Express: A Memoir of Insanity*

[Daniel Goleman](#), author, *Emotional Intelligence*

[Tulku Thondup](#), author of *The Healing Power of Mind*

[Bernie Glassman](#), author of *Infinite Circle: Teachings in Zen*

[Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche](#), author of *The Essence of Buddhism*

[Joan Halifax Roshi](#), Abbess, Upaya Zen Center

[Harold Searles, M.D.](#), author of *Countertransference and Related Subjects*

[Oliver Sachs, M.D.](#), author of *Awakenings*

[Irvin Yalom, MD](#), author of *Love's Executioner*

Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, author of *Wild Awakening*

Dr. Podvoll's important new work provides valuable insight into understanding psychosis through the application of principles from the Buddhist science of mind. *Recovering Sanity* also addresses universal pain and confusion, and the natural human longing to undertake the journey of transcendence. I recommend Dr. Podvoll's work not only to those interested in healing psychological injuries, but to those in all walks of life who wish to transcend mental suffering.

Mark Vonnegut, author of *The Eden Express: A Memoir of Insanity*

Edward Podvoll's *The Seduction of Madness* is far and away the best written, most cogent, compelling history of our attempts to come to terms with the fascinating terrifying monster of madness. What kills most books about insanity is the almost irresistible urge to romance the disease and project our social, aesthetic, religious values onto such a big inviting canvas. Edward Podvoll's book is admirably free of such romance. We are all still a million miles away from knowing enough to say who will and who won't get better and what we can do to improve our odds but we will look long and hard without finding a better statement of the problem.

Daniel Goleman, author, *Emotional Intelligence*

In *The Seduction of Madness*, Ed Podvoll offers a uniquely humane vision of the world of madness, one informed by a humanistic and compassionate sensibility. Anyone who cares about those who inhabit this world will be enriched by this book.

Tulku Thondup, author of *The Healing Power of Mind*

Recovering Sanity is a must read book on the Healing arts of the East and West, shining rays of compassionate wisdom for all who are in need of recovering their mental health.

Bernie Glassman, author of *Infinite Circle: Teachings in Zen*

The Seduction of Madness presents first of all an important alternative vision of how to help psychotic minds recover naturally, without recourse to invasive methods. But its reach far surpasses the field of mental illness. For Edward Podvoll sees full well that each of us has a recovering mind, one that is in the process of healing and discovering its innate wholeness. The treatment that he describes – how to work with islands of clarity, and the innate intelligence that guides the healing process – is a teaching not just for mental health professionals but for anyone interested in the transformation of mind, heart, and self. You rarely read a book that is so beautifully, lovingly written.

Traleq Kyabgon Rinpoche, author of *The Essence of Buddhism*

Edward Podvoll's book is a uniquely refreshing book that stands out amongst the recent spate of books on Buddhism and Psychotherapy. He manages to combine the keen eye for detail of someone trained in the western mode of thinking, with the deep and profound insight into the nature of the mind of a long-term practitioner of Buddhist meditation. Edward does not make facile comparisons between the two traditions, nor does he obfuscate the reader with tediously repetitious technical details.

Joan Halifax Roshi, Abbess, Upaya Zen Center

This extraordinary book describes Ed Podvoll's pioneering work in healing psychosis. It challenges the current medical and psychological approaches to working with psychological disorders, and opens the doors to the life of the mind that have long been closed. This book offers great possibilities not only to those touched by mental illness, but to all of us as we examine our lives in the light of a profoundly intelligent and compassionate spiritual perspective.

Harold Searles, M.D., author of *Countertransference and Related Subjects*

Edward Podvoll, M.D., is a highly original thinker who possesses, also, the ability to describe inherently complex phenomena in a remarkably lucid fashion. In these regards he is reminiscent of Stephen Hawking, the eminent Cambridge mathematician and physicist, author of the international bestseller, *A Brief History of Time*. But permeating, and over and beyond, such rare intellectual endowments is Dr. Podvoll's emotional sensitivity to the phenomena of which he writes. This is his capability which I value the most. In this brief space I cannot cite various ones among his original contributions. But I can assure the reader that he or she will find this book eminently worth the reading from cover to cover.

Oliver Sachs, M.D., author of *Awakenings*

The Seduction of Madness is a radical reconsideration of the psychotic mind and its never-lost potential for "islands of clarity" and self-recovery – one which provides us with desperately needed, humane alternatives for understanding the psychotic patient. This is first a book for patients, families, friends, and physicians – but it is equally an eloquent, and phenomenologically fascinating, meditation on the structure of mind.

Irvin Yalom, MD, author of *Love's Executioner*

A remarkable book, extremely creative and powerfully written ... careful observations made by a brilliant clinician and a wise and humane therapeutic approach.