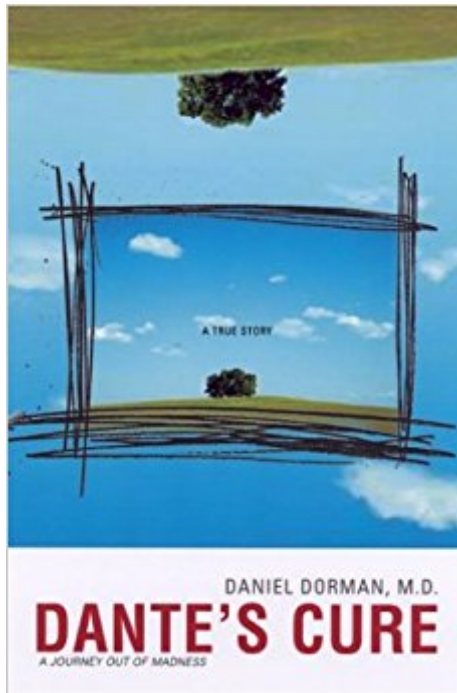




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# Dante's Cure: A Journey Out Of Madness



## Synopsis

Catherine, nineteen years old and suffering from severe schizophrenia, sat in a mental hospital mute, catatonic, and hearing voices. Her psychiatrist, Dr. Daniel Dorman, was convinced that his patient's psychotic behavior was not merely rooted in chemical imbalances but rather in the dramatic circumstances of her family history. He was therefore determined to avoid the mind-numbing medications that had been so detrimental to Catherine's well being. Dorman fought adamant opposition and criticism from his peers and superiors for a chance to guide Catherine out of madness. *Dante's Cure* is the riveting true story of a woman's triumph over her schizophrenia without medication, written by the psychiatrist who helped her.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dorman, a professor of clinical psychiatry, traces his patient Catherine's inspirational life journey from severe schizophrenia to health. When Catherine first came under Dorman's care in the 1970s at a UCLA hospital, she was an adolescent anorexic hearing suicidal and murderous voices. After fully investigating her family dynamic and diagnosing schizophrenia, Dorman began therapy sessions, but rejected the use of standard medications. Dorman describes his patient's various states during her years of crisis as a hospital inmate: her infantilism, physical deterioration, self-loathing and anger. He also describes her key dreams and the moments of interpretive breakthrough he and she made together, emphasizing the substance of their discussions and Catherine's humanity. Having successfully resisted pressure to medicate Catherine, Dorman set up

private practice and continued sessions with her. This coincided with her gradual, albeit at first fragile, recovery. Living in an apartment, attending college and qualifying as a psychiatric nurse, Catherine grew in life experience, miraculously surviving professional and relationship pressures without further breakdown or recourse to medication. In her career, Catherine, like Dorman, opposed forcing drugs on her patients, becoming a mental health activist. Dorman and Catherine came to enjoy a relationship of mutual respect and shared philosophies. Dorman's epilogue sets out a readable and reasonable opposition to the now dominant view of schizophrenia as primarily a "brain disorder" that requires medication. His advocacy of a humanist approach that emphasizes patient-doctor collaboration and the growth of soul will be welcomed by all those who value the psychotherapeutic tradition. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Psychiatry professor Dorman compassionately chronicles the remarkable life, from the onset of illness through recovery, of one of his patients without stinting graphic descriptions of her struggles with madness. Diagnosed with schizophrenia, 19-year-old Catherine Penney was dangerously thin, tormented by self-destructive voices, all but completely withdrawn. By the time she was admitted to the UCLA Hospital psychiatric ward, where Dorman was a young resident, she had already been taking antipsychotic drugs for several years to no apparent avail. Certain that her illness was treatable with psychotherapy and not a believer in pharmaceutical intervention, Dorman initiated his relationship with Catherine by interviewing her and her family. What he learned about her background reconfirmed his faith in therapy, and so the pair embarked upon a seven-year-long, six-day-a-week trek toward wellness. The upshot reads almost like fiction: 36 years later, Catherine has become a nurse and a patient advocate. Her story bodies forth a convincing affirmation that, with enough determination and the unflagging tenacity of a committed psychotherapist, anything is possible. Donna Chavez Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Courageous exploration of the lived experience of schizophrenia. Definitely thought provoking. Pet peeve, I hate the term schizophrenic. It takes away from the fact that there is a human being there who is experiencing what we call schizophrenia. While I don't agree with all concepts presented, I loved the book!

Dr. Daniel Dorman tells the tale of a young woman that ended up on his ward diagnosed as schizophrenic and his taking her under his wing. Without the use of drugs, the two walk through the

girls psychosis in a journey to bring her out of her private hell into a life of a strong woman and nurse she will become. Truly inspiring tale.

A fascinating story. Wonderfully demonstrates that the best way to cure mental illness is not pharmacology but the steady, patient, loving accompaniment of a gifted therapist.

I could not put this book down, confirms much of my philosophy as a psychologist in training! Very worthwhile reading.

An interesting story, and a revelation to me, that schizophrenia could ever be treated successfully with psychotherapy alone. What's missing from this book is a substantial account of that psychotherapy. We're given a lot of dialogue, mostly illustrating Catherine's social evolution, but I kept waiting for something meatier about the actual therapy. Near the end of the book, there are revealing views from both the patient (Catherine) and the doctor (Daniel Dorman, the author) about the nature of Catherine's emergence from the stranglehold of schizophrenia, but it's too little and too late. Also, the title of the book is very misleading. Cure implies causation or methodology, but Dorman uses Dante only for description. Each chapter begins with a quoting of Dante (from his Divine Comedy) as a description of Catherine's state of mind and recovery at that point. There are no other connections to Dante or his works. Based on the title and the subject (a journey out of madness!), I was expecting something gritty and amazing -- something I could sink my teeth into. I was disappointed on that score, but I'm not sorry I finished the book. It was an easy read that has opened my eyes to an unusual and interesting option in the treatment of schizophrenia.

Of all the books I've read on the subject, and I've read many, this one really hits home. A well-written narrative of the struggle that is schizophrenia. It boggles the mind how humanity can ignore the inhumanity and barbarism of the so-called mental health system in America today.

Although I believe the doctor/psychiatrist who wrote this book is well-meaning, it is highly unlikely that Catharine truly had schizophrenia. Anorexia can cause odd thinking/odd thinking can cause anorexia. It does not cause schizophrenia! Schizophrenia is one of the two most debilitating brain disorders (with bipolar---also called manic depression). Schizophrenia is Not caused by family problems. It is a defective gene. An unstable family situation can make the person who has this mutated gene more dysfunctional than a person from a stable family--but anyone with this gene

mutation will develop some symptoms, to some degree of the disorder. I have made a long-term, deep study of brain disorders. My MD told me that my understanding of mental disorders was greater than hers and she was an expert (she is retired now). I suffered for decades, through many types of therapy with well-meaning healthcare workers like Dr. Dorman. They encouraged me to act out my anger in various forms (Ex: bury photos of my father---a raging abuser; and my ex husband---also a raging abuser). Nothing helped. I have a high IQ, and got 3 college degrees, held down jobs---so was thought to be "OK." I was never hospitalized, despite hearing voices, behaving strangely & quitting jobs due to thinking "everyone is against me." At 45, I was diagnosed by a neurologist and psychiatrist with seizure disorders (3 of the possible 50 types of seizures) and manic-depression. I was put on medications. It took 5 years to find the right combination of Rx's for my particular problems. But the voices stopped, hallucinations stopped, my strange behaviors stopped. I now only have seizures rarely, under times of extreme stress (like when the ex was stalking me). I suffered at the hands of well-meaning doctors/psychiatrists & therapists from age 18-45 because none of them believed in medicating mentally ill patients. It's great that Catharine was helped and that she is living a good life. But people reading this must not take their loved ones off medications, thinking they can be "cured" by talking!

Dr. Dorman, with the help and consent of the patient whose story it is, has made a remarkable contribution to our collective hope for a more holistic understanding of why some of our brains take a holiday, so to speak. The courage of Dr. Dorman to refuse to administer psychiatric drugs to this patient, Catherine, seemed so daring and so risky to his own personal future in psychiatry that at times I had to stop reading and go back to make sure that the good Doctor actually did this. I became convinced that he refused to use meds because he believed with such certainty that each of us has a story that needs to be told and in order to tell it someone has to listen, really listen and observe the teller, no matter how long it takes. It seemed to me that both doctor and patient made important sacrifices of self in order for healing to take place. It is such a sweet story of compassion and recovery. This book would be interesting reading for anyone but especially interesting for those of us who were administered drugs over a long period. Many of us were not able to concentrate enough to read newspaper captions. This inability to concentrate brought new adventures in learning how support one's self! So that now, being able to read Dante's Cure we can legitimately wonder: "What if....??" but then immediately rejoice that no matter what answer pops up...we survived!! Just as Catherine did and Dr. Dorman too! Life is so full of surprises, it's hard to fathom.

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