

(Download ebook) On Our Own

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Judi Chamberlin

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Judi Chamberlin : On Our Own before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Our Own:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A FORMER MENTAL PATIENT CRITIQUES THE CURRENT SYSTEM, AND PROPOSES CHANGEBy Steven H ProppJudi Chamberlin is a former mental patient, who wrote, "Eleven years ago, I spent about five months as a patient in six mental hospitals. The experience totally demoralized me... It was years before I allowed myself to feel anger at a system that had locked me up, denied me warm and meaningful contact with human beings, drugged me, and so thoroughly confused me that I thought of this treatment as helpful." (Pg. 7)She wrote in the Introduction to this 1978 book, "This is a book about psychiatry and alternatives to it, written from a patient's point of view. For too long, mental patients have been faceless, voiceless people. We have been thought of, at worst, as subhuman monsters, or, at best, as pathetic cripples, who might be able to hold down menial jobs and eke out meager existences, given constant professional support. Not only have others thought of us in this stereotyped way, we have believed it of ourselves. It is only in this decade, with the emergence and growth of the mental patients' liberation movement, that we ex-patients have begun to shake off this distorted image and to see ourselves for what we are---a diverse group of people, with strengths and weaknesses, abilities and needs, and ideas of our own. Our ideas about our 'care' and 'treatment' at the hands of psychiatry, about the nature of 'mental illness,' and the new and better ways to deal with (and truly to help) people undergoing emotional crises differ drastically from those of mental health professionals." (Pg. xi)She adds, "No one denies that people in emotional pain can use help---the questions arise over what kinds of help, and under what circumstances. The present mental health system focuses

much of its attention on people who do not want help, people who have been defined as mentally ill and unable to judge their own best interests... Although all is done in the name of care and concern, the underlying coercive nature of the system constantly makes itself felt. Patients are not supposed to speak of it... Only when the patient learns the rules of the game---that black is to be called white, and punishment called treatment---does the staff consider him or her to be on the road to recovery. The real lesson is that one must always hide one's true feelings---hardly a prescription for emotional well-being." (Pg. xiv) Later, she adds, "The reliance on medical expertise leads to passive patients submitting to 'treatments' such as the heavy use of psychiatric drugs, which is often perceived by the patients as torture. Only agreeing that one is ill and in need of help brings the possibility of ending the treatment." (Pg. 111) She notes, "The alternative programs that form the subject of this book are different, because their underlying philosophy is different. Nonprofessional, client-controlled services don't divide people into 'sick' and 'well'... They see every person as having a combination of strengths and weaknesses, and the need for help in one area does not negate the ability to help others also." (Pg. 63) She concludes, "Community mental health centers are not replacing the state hospital system; they are a growing, parallel bureaucracy. Community mental health centers need state hospitals as weapons with which to threaten their 'difficult' patients. And the state hospital bureaucracies, which have held power within each state for well over a hundred years, are not simply folding their tents... In many states, new state hospitals are being built (and filled). And in nearly every state the scandals of patient mistreatment and abuse continue..." (Pg. 219) This book was one of the "foundational" texts of the psychiatric survivors' movement, and is an inspiration as well to the later Mad Pride movement.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Insightful read
By Larry Almarode
I'm the executive director of a peer run program and had heard of this book from fellow leaders in our community. While our program isn't ideologically as pure as what is in this book, we do adhere to the concepts. This alternative view of care saved my life and restored my loss of humanity going through the traditional mental health system. I think this should be required reading for anyone entering into the field of human services.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A necessary resource for anyone researching the mental health consumer movement
By Jay
Book is well written. It is a necessary resource for anyone wanting to understand the mental health consumer movement. It provides a historical view of the movement as well as reasons for addressing the current policies of health care administrations who are only interested in promoting a medical view of health care without addressing an individual's own ability to get well.

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