

Against depression by peter kramer book review

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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1 and 2. Preface

Against depression is the title of the book written by Peter Kramer a renowned psychiatrist, the title of the book suggests more of a political inclination of some sort but the book narrates a different story all together. The book is majorly focused on the idea that most people are in support of depression as an aid to artistic expression. Its incorporation of latest research in the psychiatric field is also very crucial as it facilitates the comprehensive and explicit explanation as well as illustration of physical damages of the brain and its major causes.

It further explains in an easy to conceptualize manner some of the key factors that are responsible for depression before making a successful attempt in putting forth measures that can aid in curbing depression.

Peter Kramer, the author of this book is known for his bestselling book the Listening to Prozac which is known for the revolutionary role it played in the way most people think in relation to antidepressants. His specialisation in the field of depression as an American psychiatrist and former Marshall Scholar, makes his expertise in the area undoubtedly significant. He has also been a long time member of the Brown Medical School, which has in a great way played a vital role in the nurturing of his expertise in the area of depression besides creating a platform for conduction of research in his area of specialisation. From 2005 to 2006 Kramer served as a host to a radio program that was involved in the discussion of issues concerning depression and was thus branded as The Infinite Mind. He is presently involved in the writing as well as reviewing of psychiatric books where he has established a niche in the depression area.

The penguin group of publishers is the one responsible for the publication of this book. As a publishing firm they have a wide coverage in relation to their location, with branches in the UK, Canada, USA, Australia, India, china, south Africa as well as New zealand. This wide coverage reflects the publishing firms' competence and position in the publishing industry. Therefore enhancing confidence in their work since it is based on a wealth of experience and skill. The copyrights of the book are reserved to the author and only him.

3. Direction taken by the book

Any reader with a keen interest to get an in depth understanding of the cause, effects as well as preventive measures of depression will certainly be

satisfied with the content of the book. In the book Kramer makes and insistent argument that depression is a disease which individuals would do well if they whole heartedly try as hard as they possibly can to oppose it. What is intriguing is the manner in which he succeeds in consistently following up his argument with a great degree of explicitly and logical flow. This is vital as it enables the reader easily follow up an idea and eventually grasp the underlying concept being put forth in the discussion.

He further examines the cultural roots of notions of depressions in an attempt to underscore the gap that exist between what is scientifically known concerning the illness and what individuals perceive and feel about depression with close respect to their cultural beliefs and ways of life's. This aspect enables the reader to get a clear understanding of the difference as well as the relationship that exists in the views held both the scientific and the cultural sectors.

The books curiosity, suspense and maintenance of perfect balance between science and human interest makes the book a mind arrester as it surprises the reader with new concepts and discovery with the launch of a each chapter. These concepts are founded on research hence are very educative to reader due to their wealth of insights.

4. Thesis of the book

The main thesis in the book is the different ideologies held in relation to the concept of depression and how they in one way or the other contribute to the depression phenomena. This is clearly captured in his arguments in the book about ideas both scientific and cultural that are for and against the

truth behind depression which he argues to be an illness rather than a feeling. The title of the book too has not failed to capture this aspect as is reflected by the use of the word " against" which represents the ideology that are not in support of depression being an illness.

5. Structure of the book

6. Summaries of the book's chapters

The first chapter is used to introduce the reader on what depression really is and how it could be addressed. He uses the example of tuberculosis as a reference on how depression might be a disease but the factor is being ignored.

The second and third chapters focus majorly on how the cultures of the western countries have romanticized depression making it look as if it is not a disease, here again he uses the example of TB and how it was romanticized, he focuses on the similarity of the perception of the two conditions while trying to prove that depression is undergoing what TB underwent.

In the fourth chapter, Dr. Peter Kramer uses examples to show how casually the " disease" is taken among adults, artists, celebrities, and even among his colleagues.

The fifth chapter looks at depression from his initial book on the same " Listening to Prozac". Where he considers depression, just as a TB, a disease rather than a casual condition as has been considered by both the victims of the " disease" and their subjects and even his colleagues. Here he ponders the question, " What if van Gogh had been on anti-depressants?" with this he

manages to bring forth the argument against depression being taken lightly[CITATION Kra06 I 1033].

The sixth, seventh and eighth chapters concentrate on medical research covering depression, he bases on his experience as a doctor and others work. Here he uses the examples of his patients who visit him and the characteristics that show how biological depression is but is taken casually. He does this by framing his argument as such " Depression causes profound pain and impairment. It is syndromal, characterized by a reliable cluster of disabilities, such as sadness, appetite and sleep abnormalities, and problems with memory and concentration. Depression progresses, in the fashion of diseases. With recurrence, depression's symptoms become more diverse and less responsive to treatment. Depressives die young. Depression runs in families. Depression is found in every culture."[CITATION Kra06 I 1033]. He, in a great extent, succeeds in emphasizing his point that depression is a disease.

The medical gets deeper in the ninth and tenth chapters where he shifts his attention to the Biology behind brain and how depression has significant effects on the body and that is has a Biological substrate.

In the eleventh to fourteenth chapters, Dr. Kramer does not discard the neurotransmitter theory about the brain but supports it with explanations on how it is brought about by the depression.

In chapters fifteen and sixteenth, he looks at the neuron-cells and the genetic perspective of the disease. Kramer claims that the disease is genetic and tends to run in the blood. He however shows less confidence that the

secrets of depression would be soon unraveled considering the less research focused on that side.

In chapters seventeen and eighteen he relays most of the vital chapters and brings culture history and art in face to face with Biology. Where he displays the two worlds as dependant on each other, the culture could influence the Biology by creating a wrong perception about the later. History has proved this to be true as in the case of TB, Leprosy, and e. t. c.[CITATION Kra06 I 1033]

Basically, Dr. Peter Kramer focuses his last three chapters on the achievement of a depression free world, to change peoples' view about depression into viewing the same as a disease in order to save the world. He lists depression among known diseases that were formerly treated equally in a casual manner but were later accepted as diseases and since then measures have been taken to reduce them[CITATION Kra06 I 1033].

7. Analysis

Indeed the book has tried to capture both the cultural perspective/society's understanding of what depression is and the current application of science in understanding factors that influence human life. From the people's way of life/their time-honored practices, we can see that they had a view/ideology on certain aspects of influence to human life and their way of operation. The book tries to dispute the fact that some things we do overlook through our cultural understanding but the real fact is that they are threats to human existence.

He reflects on melancholy to be a serious illness with tangible physiological

effects such as jumbling the brain and disturbing the role of the cardiovascular system. He criticizes society for romanticizing dejection in the equivalent way that tuberculosis was once idealized; these impractical conceptions engage claims of inventive sensitivity or of brilliance arising from depression.

The overall collision of the book is that, the author is trying to impart a message to the people on the dangers of romanticizing the piece of depression only to be censured afterward with the advancement of technology in science to prove it as a disease and not an aspect of "heroic melancholy." The audience feels the impact and somehow responds positively. This is because of the ideologies articulated by the author who tries to convince the people not to romanticize everything and try to look at the reality behind everything.

The case that the author comes up with is of a social criticism and a scientific explanation for the purpose of his thesis/hypothesis is the reference to tuberculosis. This is a considerate case because of intensification transversely through history and customs to weave collectively a coerced representation of our modern sight of depression, and how its confusion as a 'heroic melancholy' was misused only to be positioned as a disease. Today's effect of tuberculosis on the society is a true point of reflection to this case as an impassioned plea for our culture to recognize tuberculosis as a disease that is a threat to human kind. What was considered as symptoms of tuberculosis and there relativity to depression is a purpose enough to consider melancholy as a disease and not sighted as ennobling, a basis of inspiration, truth, imminent, and corporeality.

8. Conclusion

Prior to this time, a cultural ideology was the opium of the masses. Many people inclined their way of thinking to the overall mindset of the society. This has now created a situation of cultural divide between the adoption of science and the inclination of our thinking towards cultural ideologies that has averted us from recognizing depression as a disease. Considering the many symptoms of depression as explained in the text by the researchers who observed the revelation of decline in cortical thickness, cell size and cell compactness in brain tissues and its effect on the prefrontal cortex where cells correspond via norepinephrine and serotonin (the chemicals that have long been spotted as serving mood regulatory purposes). These are brain pathologies, which correlates to a disease because of the effects of such symptoms, which include profound pain and impairment. It is syndromal, characterized by a consistent huddle of disabilities, such as misery, craving and sleep defects, and tribulations of memory and deliberation. Through all these proof, depression henceforth can be controlled through medications, then depression should be positioned as a disease and not as an aspect of artistry.

Significance

The value of the book is its significance in trying to elucidate to the depressed how they should treat these defect, hence its recommendation for those who find themselves in a similar situation. In addition, it also reveals a clue on how specific defects affecting the human race emotionally should not be overlooked but a lot should be put in place to unearth its cause and its major effects to that person rather than exposing ourselves more as

culturally impaired people. Moreover, it discourages the modern world with its adoption to science technology not to rely more on culturally bread ideologies on aspects affecting humanity.

Hence, the book is of worth more to general human race who are prone to the topic discussed and how they may be able to overcome the same. More precise to the people affected by the melancholy and are in need of help on how to handle the situation Hence its targeting more on the affected few.