

# [The act of labeling people with mental illness](https://assignbuster.com/the-act-of-labeling-people-with-mental-illness/)

Human begins have been labeling people since the beginning of time. It is human nature to put labels on people in an attempt to better understand someone. People us labeling for example when they see a group of people wearing the same clothing and listening to the same music, and this is roughly the same concept used to help psychologist know what is happening to a patient. (Lain). “ Psychologist is most likely to able to help individuals who are suffering from mental disorders when they can make an accurate pyschodiagnosis, an attempt to describe, asses, and systematically draw inferences about an individual’s psychological disorder.”(Sue, David).

Over the years, the meaning behind labeling has changed. In the nineteen forties, labeling a person moron and idiot was used to describe someone with mental illness. “ And the history of slavery indicates that African Americans who tried to escape their white masters were often labeled as suffering from drapetomania, defined as a sickness that makes the person desire freedom.” (Sue, David). Now, Psychologists use terms out of the DSM-IV to describe people with mental illness. (Autonomous). Using this method of labeling people who have a mental illness has its pros and cons.  Cons of labeling people: making a diagnosis is simply the act of labeling the person, once labeled he or she may have difficulty overcoming the label, having a hard time identifying themselves without the disease (having the disease define who they are, instead of the disease just being the disease), and may lose hope of recovery.(Lain). Pros of labeling people: provides patients with a means of communicating about what is going on with their body to other people, helps identify and to find support, some people are relieved when they learn that the symptoms they are experiencing have a name, and offers a sense of hope and personal control over the illness.(Lain).

Labeling a person who has a mental illness may do more harm than good. Words have a powerful meaning, though we are taught to say “ sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Words have more of an impact on us then we would like to admit. Words can be used to hurt other people. (Jack Bragen). “ Hitler once braded the Jews as abnormal.” (Sue, David). People, once labeled or have a diagnosis, forget who they once were as people, and start to let the diagnosis define who they are as people. This can be bad for the patient, because they not lose themselves, but they start to lose hope with the treatment itself. This also will occur when people try and diagnosis themselves. Thomas Szasz, a health professional, has stated that “. . . mental illness is a myth, a fictional creation by society used to control and change people.”(Sue, David).

A person who knows their diagnosis may become consumed with the diagnosis. The person could make this their whole life, and use their diagnosis to validate their behaviors, saying they cannot help it, and their behavior cannot change. Some people will choose to hide behind their diagnosis, and never try and get better. (Lain). The people who like to get attention for their behaviors may benefit from getting the opportunity to use their diagnosis to excuse everything they do or say. If the person becomes too consumed with their diagnosis of a mental illness the patient may start to lose most or all hope in being treated. The person can become overwhelmed with their diagnosis, and from this feeling alone assume they will feel this way for the rest of their lives. (Autonomous).

Though there are some downsides to labeling people with a mental illness there are some positives. Giving someone a label may help them better communicate to others about what is going on with their bodies to other people. With this label people are more able to know how to handle a situation. If someone for example says they have autism, the person who they are speaking to will know that they may not like close contact, and eye contact. This will help the person learning about the diagnosis not to be offended if they aren’t receiving the same communication skills back in return. (Lain).

By the patient receiving information about their mental illness, they are able to find support groups. Often time’s people feel alone when they hear about their diagnosis, but once the patient hears they are not the only ones, this can create a sense of comfort. People who around others that know exactly what they are going through have a better chance of succeeding in their treatment, because of all the support they are receiving.  When a patient hears there is a name to what they have been experiencing they feel a sense of comfort knowing what is going on with their bodies. Knowing the name of their diagnosis gives can give people a sense of hope and power of their diagnosis. They could also feel more involved in their treatment process. (Lain).

“ The DSM-IV is not used to categorize people, but to categorize conditions or disorders that people have…” from a website titled, “ All about Depression.” (Dr. Prentiss). It is important to know that people must say the diagnosis right that we do not say for example that Sarah is cancer, we say Sarah has cancer. By saying the diagnosis this way patients look at their diagnosis as part of them, instead of the diagnosis being them. The disadvantages of labeling people: making a diagnosis is simply the act of labeling the person, once labeled he or she may have difficulty overcoming the label, having a hard time identifying themselves without the disease (having the disease define who they are, instead of the disease just being the disease), and may lose hope of recovery. (Lain). The positives of labeling people: provides patients with a means of communicating about what is going on with their body to other people, helps identify and to find support, some people are relieved when they learn that the symptoms they are experiencing have a name, and offers a sense of hope and personal control over the illness. (Lain). By labeling people with mental illness the “ psychologist can attempt to identify the causes of the disorders in order to design a program of treatment.”(Sue, David).