

# UNSHACKLED



With contributions from  
**valued lived experts.**

Unlabelled suggests a movement away from labelling, towards a more accepting and understanding approach to mental health. Unshackled conveys the idea of freeing one's mind from the shackles of stigma and labels.

Whilst sitting at the beach, it got me thinking, how many of these people have a psychiatric diagnosis and have experienced labelling? How many go about their day normally even through everything they've experienced?

How many are actually keeping their heads above water on a day to day basis and not just at the beach?

#### Intelligent LCD

When picking a topic to work on with Lived Experts, I knew I wanted to focus on labelling and receiving a diagnosis. Stigma is such a common experience amongst those with mental health diagnoses, but it isn't talked about enough. Neither is the experience of getting diagnosed; how daunting it may feel to get diagnosed with something that you'll likely carry for the rest of your life.

This zine consists of artwork, spoken word, poetry, quotes from the lived experts, and much more, all created by those who have experienced labelling and getting diagnosed. It has been an absolute pleasure to co-produce this zine with lived experts. Getting to connect with others and hear their stories has been very special to me. Thank you to everyone that has contributed.

- Cansu ☺

SAMSUNG





What feelings or words come to mind when  
you think about labels or psychiatric  
diagnoses?

"OVERWHELMING"

"LIMITING"

"SCARY"

"CONSTRUCTIVE"

"INSTRUCTIVE"

"EMPOWERING"

"IMPRISONING"

"RESTRICTING"

"MAD"

"IMPER-  
SONAL"

"INSIGHTFUL"

"ANSWER"

"LOADED"

"LAZY"

"REDUCTIONIST"

"STIGMA-  
TISING"



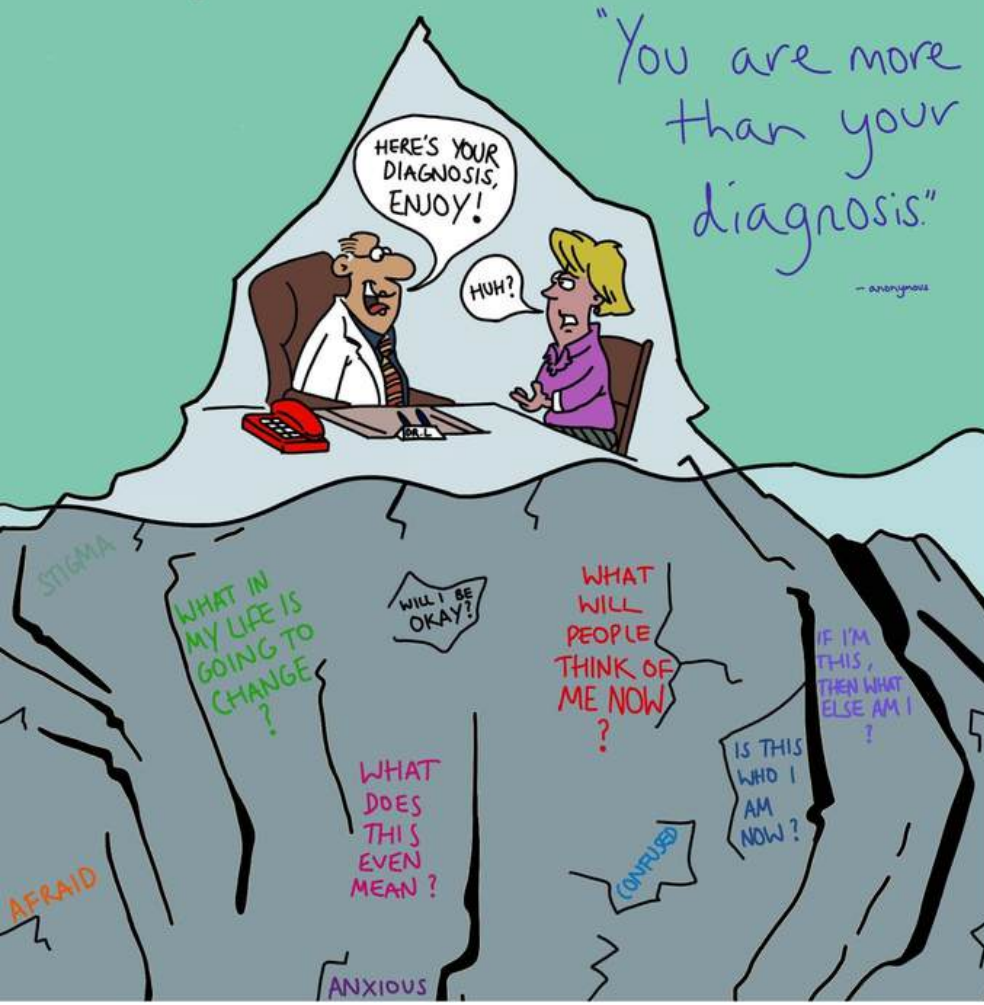
"DEHUMAN-  
ISING"

"UNHELPFUL"

"ENABLING"

\*The following words  
were quoted from a  
focus group regarding  
psychiatric diagnosis  
and labels.

Receiving a diagnosis can be daunting. Often you may get given a diagnosis that remains with you for the rest of your life. Just handed to you so casually. You may be left clueless, anxious. Maybe even angry at your doctor for giving you something you'll carry for the rest of your life that they'll forget about in 5 minutes. You may feel overwhelmed with all the new information given to you about yourself. Being diagnosed is just the **tip of the iceberg**. Is this who you are now? No, it is not,



So... What do you think of me?  
I was a crazy, reckless, obsessive,  
depressed,  
criminal, ungrateful, lonely, drug  
taking, violent,  
suicidal teenager.

But I was also one of the nicest people  
you will ever meet, I would say hello to  
strangers, act politely, help others, try  
to make people happy, make people laugh  
and stand up for those who need it.

**I was a paradox.**

But now I know, I'm simply a Man learning  
to live with Bipolar Type I.

By: **Ed**



An abstract painting featuring a large, vibrant red shape on the left side. The rest of the canvas is filled with dynamic, expressive brushstrokes in shades of yellow, black, blue, and purple. The word 'HONESTY' is written in blue ink at the top left.

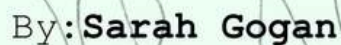
HONESTY

By: Taj

WHAT IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER?  
WHAT IF I DIDN'T KNOW AT ALL?  
WOULD'VE YOUR WORDS HURT ME?  
WOULD'VE YOUR LABELS STICK  
WITH ME?  
KINDNESS SEEMS TO IGNORE YOU;  
'WEAK'NESS IS THE HATRED  
IN YOUR EVERY BREATH,  
'CRAZY' IS THE LACK OF DEPTH  
IN YOUR EMPATHY.  
YOUR MEMORY  
IS THE ENEMY  
OF MY PEACE,  
AS THE KNOWLEDGE  
OF YOUR VERY EXISTENCE  
THREATENS THE WELLBEING  
OF THOSE AROUND YOU  
WAITING  
FOR THE NAME CALLING  
THAT SHOULD HAVE NEVER  
LEFT YOUR MOUTH.

By: Inês Mália Sarmiento





\*Partial Credit to Gloria Gaynor, Scott English & Richard Kerr.



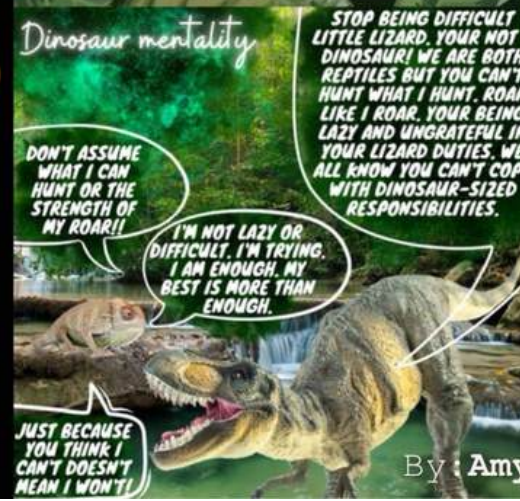
The following labels were quoted directly from a focus group with lived experts regarding labels and psychiatric diagnoses.



Sometimes people mean well and have good intentions. However, when you have a mental health diagnosis. People can assume what you can and can't do. Or what you won't or want to do. Which can have a negative impact on both sides. Especially, for mental health research. I think more should be done to encourage a creative dialogue about lived experience. This can help with engagement, recruitment for projects and finding innovative ways to voice meaningful changes to services. While fostering a better understanding of mental health experiences.

I think not assuming what people will answer to your question will go a lot further than research might expect when it comes to achieving more for PPI work and research. Which will be mutually beneficial for service users and research. I've been involved in presentations, a podcast and now a zine. Imagine what other creative ways we can find for others to voice their experience and have input on research and to shape services.

So please don't be afraid to ask questions. Be afraid of not asking questions, and not knowing what more could have been done and achieved with a simple, "Yes."



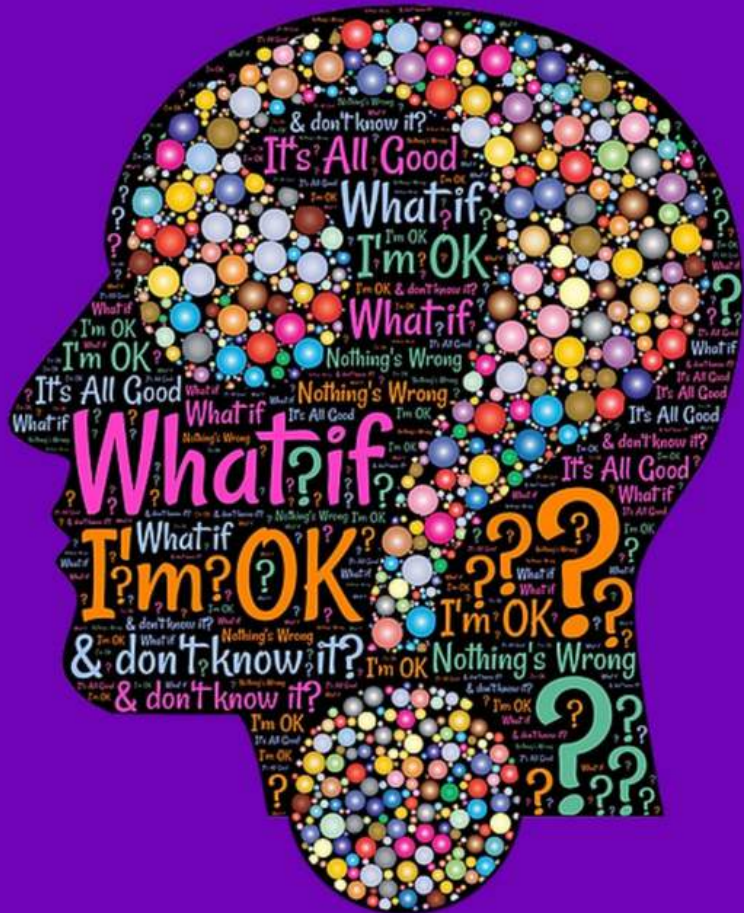
Being different doesn't equal bad or dangerous. You can have anxiety but your label doesn't become your new name. You're more than the sum of your diagnosis and symptoms. The cure for stigma is living your truth and the only label that matters is your own self purpose.



The old ways of thinking about mental health should be extinct. On with the future understanding of the human side of mental health and research! People with lived experience not just symptoms, stereotypes and labels.

By: Amy Grant





'In Indian culture's shadowed keep,  
Psychiatric labels cut so deep,  
Scars of stigma, voices mute,  
Spirits shackled, struggles acute.  
Souls left grappling, unseen wounds,  
Whispered judgments, silence looms.  
In this darkness, hearts confined,  
Seeking solace, peace to find...'

By TS

# INTERNATIONAL *Day of* IDENTITY CRISIS!

My diagnosis empowers me. But wow, it confuses me too. I wake up, pop my pills, and sometimes, that's it. But sometimes, I wonder: wait, do these pills make me who I am? Who I'm not? Who was I before I took these prescribed pills? Was I... me? Not me? Or am I still growing? Learning? Evolving? Am I ever going to be me?

I knew it ran in the family, like a secret curse that plagued us all. But when that psychiatrist uttered the words Bipolar Disorder to me, with my mom sitting closely beside me, I almost wanted to laugh. If I have Bipolar, then who the hell am I? What label will they give me now?

Here you go: you get a label!!!! A misunderstood, but sexy, previously defined manic depression. Wait, why did they rename it? And why is it now Bipolar? Am I simply just two sides of a pole..? But I'm also a Gemini, so what does that mean? What will people think? Who am I? What do I think? I spent most of my life somewhere in the murky middle...didn't really go up or down. So why am I defined by these outliers? Do we do the same with the so-called normal folks?

Don't call me moody! I am nothing of the kind. I have spent my entire adult life managing my moods and you have the audacity to call me 'moody'. If I'm moody, then what else am I?

BRING ON THE IDENTITY CRISIS

WAIT, WHO AM I???

By Gabi



Diagnosis

Labels



SCHIZZO

PARANOID

STIGMA  
AND  
MENTAL  
ILLNESS

THEY CALL US



SCHIZOPHRENIA

BPD

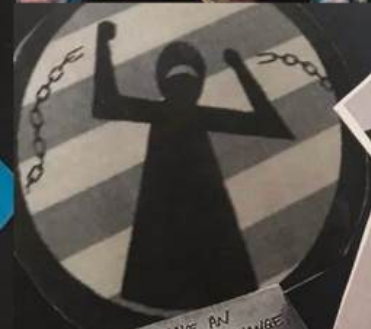
DEPRESSION

ANXIETY

D.I.D

PTSD

BIPOLAR



THE STIGMA MIGHT MAKE AN  
INDIVIDUAL WANT TO HIDE OR CHANGE  
SOCIETY BEARS THE RESPONSIBILITY  
ADAPT...  
SOCIETY SHOULD EVOLVE AND  
CREATE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE EVERYONE  
REGARDLESS OF DIFFERENCES CAN BE  
ACCEPTED AND TREATED FAIRLY.



By: Nicola Sirey



When I first met BPD  
I was not free  
From abuse  
And then I met  
The stigma  
Discrimination  
At the hands of  
Professionals

Bpd  
Not easy  
For you to see  
Or believe  
The pain  
A real strain  
On how  
I see myself

The judgement  
Makes it harder  
"Attention seeking"  
People seeking  
To fix me  
My behaviour  
My reactions

Human response  
To abnormal treatment  
From my parents

Growing up was hard  
Childhood  
Adolescence  
Adulthood too

Patterns repeating  
Bpd had me in chains  
From the day I was diagnosed  
To who I am today  
I still see  
A terrified little girl  
Little me  
Wish I could hold her  
Tell her  
I've got you now

But now  
I refuse to label myself  
The way  
That psychiatrist  
Labelled me  
After ten minutes

So easy to see me as  
crazy

When in fact  
I'm not lazy  
I'm struggling  
I'm human  
I'm suffering  
I'm human

I will be ok  
I will be ok  
I will be ok

Thank you for listening  
To a small part of  
My story

;

Oh the semicolon  
I choose  
Every day  
For my story not to end  
The same way it started  
I will be free  
From my demons  
Including the labels  
Placed upon me

By:Nikki Mattocks



By:Louie Christie