

Psychiatry in pictures

EDITED BY ALLAN BEVERIDGE

Do you have an image, preferably accompanied by 100 to 200 words of explanatory text, that you think would be suitable for Psychiatry in Pictures? Submissions are very welcome and should be sent direct to Dr Allan Beveridge, Queen Margaret Hospital, Whitefield Road, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0SU, UK.



Empower Me (2000). Donna Lawrence (b. 1973). Text by Donna Lawrence

Empower Me is an image that epitomises the experience of living with a mental illness. Sometimes painful, sometimes confusing, sometimes even surprisingly enlightening, illness can change the way one views the world. This image refers to these attributes by depicting a figure that is bound by bandages – a means usually of healing the body, but in this case unable to heal the mind. Text appears on the image: ‘empower me’ and ‘release me’. It refers not only to the illness itself, but also to the society that classifies us, aims to help us, and sometimes even means to control us.

The figure’s head is bandaged, and this is paramount to the reading of the work. The brain is the centre of our universe. It defines us and allows us to be individuals. Ironically, for many it limits and even defines us because of our illnesses. We are bound by our mood swings, our delusions, our uncertainty, all arising through the workings of the mind. The head is bandaged denoting illness, and the text emphasises the will to escape or gain knowledge from this illness.

Although the image itself could be viewed as portraying a negative view of mental illness, it is meant also to show hope. The text allows the view that we may learn and grow from our troubles and that good can indeed arise out of difficulty.