

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.



Text and image by Ian Palmer, MRCPsych (b. 1953)

In 1999 I had depressive illness that required physical and pharmacological attention. I was offered cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) but I declined. While being able to undertake all the exercises, I was unable to utilise the results to improve my mental state. I had what psychoanalysts would call 'isolation of affect' and was coping, indeed had coped for many years, through its use alongside other psychological defence mechanisms such as 'rationalisation', 'intellectualisation' and 'projection'. It required a mixture of experiential therapies, including psychodrama, to 'heal my mind'.

My initial artwork swung between swathes of colour and obsessional mechanical drawings. As therapy progressed, 'locked-in' figures appeared. Unconsciously, I used my paintings as a form of projection, producing pictures which distressed onlookers yet left me emotionally untouched. In time, however, the figures 'loosened-up', mirroring the improvements in my mental state.

I have continued to draw and paint and would firmly recommend experiential therapies, in all their different forms, as a useful adjunct in the management of patients with isolation of affect – so often seen in the survivors of various abuses – and others unable to utilise CBT.