

At the Edge: Madness and Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



WEEK 5 Valuing an Insider View

SR: Steve Reid

So well done on reaching the end of week five. It's been a fascinating exploration of the issues of mental health and the role of the arts in elucidating some of those difficult-to-understand issues particularly the insider or subjective view of mental illness, what it's like. We've, with the help of my two colleagues, we've touched on the central issue of imagination, that the arts helps us to understand that other view. They also help us in maintaining the authenticity of the experience and the role of respect that allows us to practise a degree of empathy that would otherwise maybe not be possible. We moved on also to the issues of art in the form of advocacy in bringing things to public attention to overcome the issues of stigma that surround particularly serious mental illness when people seem to cross a line beyond which it feels is not acceptable to society.

There's one final issue that I'd like to leave you with and that is art as escape from an unbearable reality such as mental illness and some of our pharmacological interventions like the drugs that people take merely allows them to escape from that particular situation as opposed to art that enhances life that really allows us to be fully human as painful and joyful as it can be.

So I leave you with this task of making sense of your own experience of mental disturbance whatever it is, either in somebody who is close to you or your own experience. How does this week help you to make sense of those experiences? And I look forward to your responses following this



Steve Reid 2017

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