

## **Subject-based Zine Finding Aid: Mind Matters - Diverse Perspectives on Mental Health**

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### **Introduction**

The zines called together in this finding aid represent diverse perspectives on mental health. However, only a fraction of the records arrayed alongside one another here have been identified by QPIRG's librarians as dedicated primarily to considerations of health. Rather than a direct, head-on identification of mental health within the archives, this finding aid roams riotous across categories to look at mental health from all angles. And, what with all the roaming and rioting, this finding aid must be acknowledged as a socially active (MacNeil 2012, 485) form of archival representation (Yakel 2003, 2), which emphasizes the artificial nature of the connections forged through this particular alignment of records.

Alignment, in the sense suggested by Marika Cifor (2016), refers both to arrangement - to classification and organization - and to orientation - to a shared perspective, which is also a form of solidarity. Alignment is a call to order, which is also always a call to action - a call to recognize the potential of radically divergent poetics and aesthetics that nonetheless resonate with a critical perspective on mental health. The word critical is also active here, taking on two meanings: this finding aid is resonant with vital stories - crucial knowledges - and at the same time, the voices here speak out against systemic oppression and towards a liberation that can be as close at hand as a quick break from the day to day in order to doodle (Momo 2025) or as far-flung as a migration journey eked out over days and across treacherous terrain (Peña et al. 2015). This finding aid is, to draw on Julie Avril Minich's (2023) phrasing, a "powerful resource for imagining radical mental health," because the records represented here uniformly "demand conditions for wellbeing while refusing to stigmatize unwellness" (119).

The perspective on mental health represented here must be recognized as rooted in an expansive tradition of political activism that moves, as Mia Mingus puts it, "away from an equality based model of sameness and 'we are just like you' to a

model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege and challenges what is considered ‘normal’ on every front” (qtd. in Minich 2023, 5). What Mingus describes is Disability Justice, a foundational framework that Minich (2023) builds upon to describe activism that “centers not just disability but multiple and mutually reinforcing systems of oppression; the embrace of interdependence over independence; and the desire for revolution over reform” (5). The resources represented here speak directly to the revolution identified in and sought out by Minich and the activists and scholars who raged against systemic injustice and towards more bearable worlds on the streets and in the development of a Critical Disability Studies for (Kafer 2013; McRuer 2018; Minich, 2016; Puar 2016; Schalk 2022). Of course, rage connotes not only revolution, but also madness.

Madness, as La Marr Jurelle Bruce (2021) puts it, “is a floating signifier and dynamic social construction that evades stable definition. On the other hand, or maybe in the same hand, madness is a lived reality that demands sustained attention” (6). It is Mad Studies – an offshoot of Critical Disability Studies – which identifies the “biomedical approach to understanding and treating people’s experiences of altered states of mind and/or distress [that] continues to dominate mental health policy, practice, and research” and opens up a space for [Mad] voices to articulate themselves on their own terms” (LeFrançois et al. 2016, 1). Mad Studies makes space for what Bruce (2021) describes as phenomenal madness – “an intense unruliness of mind – producing fundamental crises of perception, emotion, meaning, and selfhood” and medicalized madness – “psychopathologies codified by the psy sciences of psychiatry, psy- chology, and psychoanalysis” as well as pure old-fashioned rage (6-7); and, insofar as the records identified here are flush with all three, this finding aid is an articulation of mad matters (Menziés et al. 2013).

And so, in the spirit of Mad Studies, now is the time for a little redirection – a turn away from what we the archivists have to say about ourselves and our work, and a consideration of what the records themselves have to say.

## **Overview of Items**

The zines in this collection were selected because they approach mental health through multiple vantage points, across several eras. Some described the topic through a structural lens. *The Poverty of Student Life*, written in 1966 in France, provides a sharp analysis of student consciousness fracturing under capitalism. Legendary Marxist philosopher Angela Davis’s *Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired*, originally an address at Bennett College in 1987, outlines Black women’s vulnerability

to psychological distress within a wide range of health problems rooted in poverty and racism (Lamas 2020). *We Are All Very Anxious*, written in 2014 by the Institute for Precarious Consciousness, argues that “in contemporary capitalism, the dominant reactive affect is anxiety” (4).

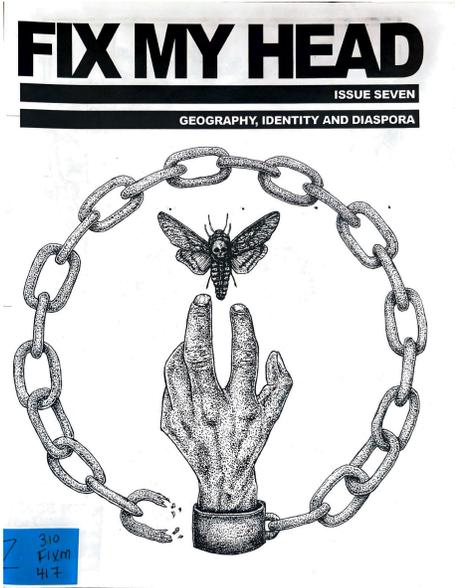
Other selections combine personal experiences with broader discussions of political, social, and economic structures. In *Sick Woman Theory*, first published in *Mask Magazine* in 2016 (Small 2016), Joanna Hevda proposes an expansive notion of the ‘Sick Woman’ as anyone living outside “wellness as the default” (17), whose existence is devalued under capitalism. Their analysis is grounded in their experiences of chronic illness and disability, including endometriosis, bipolar disorder, complex PTSD, panic disorder, depersonalization/derealization disorder and one or several unnamed autoimmune diseases. *Fix My Head* (2015) contains a poignant essay from Fabian Romero, a self-described “indigenous immigrant queer boi writer”, about the experience of grieving loved ones across borders, away from home communities, and the “loneliness that comes from the systematic isolation of oppression” (34). In *You Improvise to Survive* (2009), Amazon explains the affective experience of being a trans woman in prison, the context of sexuality and negotiation of safe sex practices, and the grief of seeing frequent deaths, for which “no one pauses, no one says a prayer” (4).

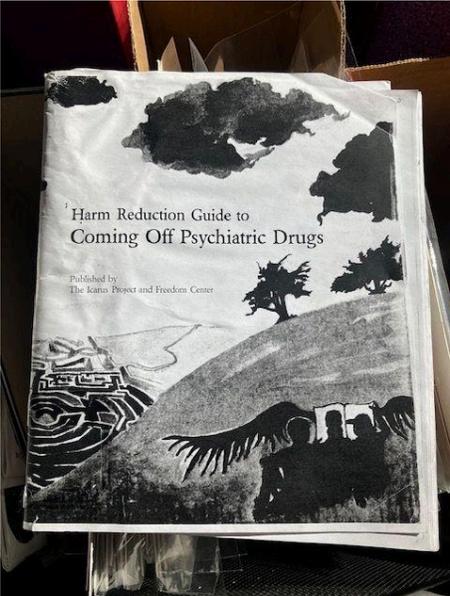
Another cluster of zines in this collection showcase personal stories. Queer Korean multi-disciplinary artist Heidi Cho’s comic, *Trying My Very Best*, offers a glimpse of her depression and healing practices (Cho n.d.), while the compilation *Pathologize This*, created in Montreal in 2008, gives voice to numerous personal experiences of mental health realities informed by racism, white supremacy, sexual abuse, patriarchy, ableism, and capitalism.

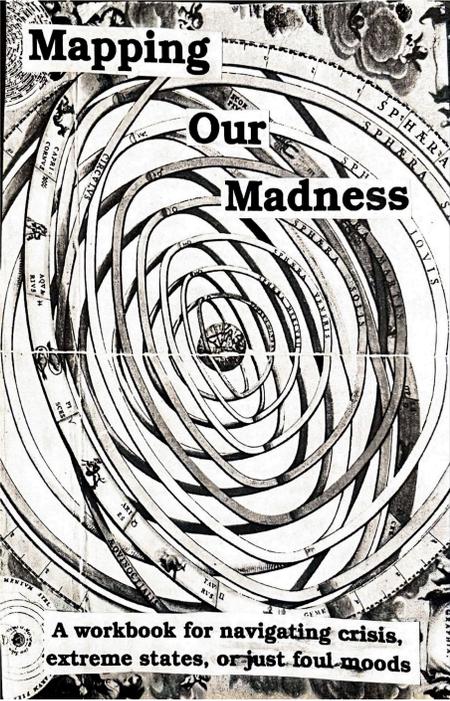
Finally, two zines in this collection offer practical resources for readers. *The Harm Reduction Guide to Coming Off Psychiatric Drugs* was authored in 2007 by two American community activist groups focusing on alternatives to biopsychiatric views of mental health, the Icarus Project and Freedom Center (DuBrul 2014; Shana 2014). Guided by the principles of choice, information, and access, it provides practical tips for cutting down or stopping the use of psychiatric drugs (Icarus Project and Freedom Center 2007, 12). *Mapping Our Madness: A Workbook for Navigating Crisis, Extreme States, or Just Foul Moods* is a workbook readers can fill out to remind themselves of their preferred self-care strategies during low moments.

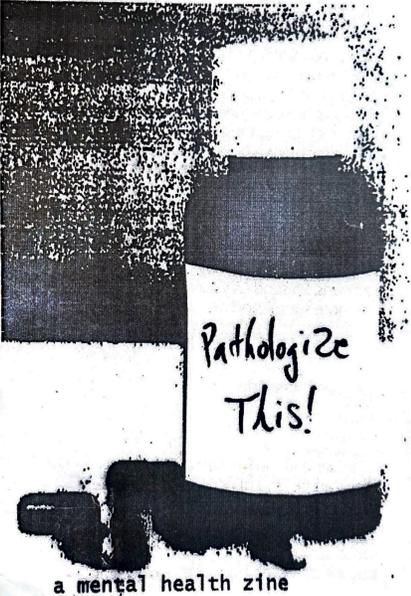
This collection, organized alphabetically to encourage spontaneous encounters with the records rather than imposed arrangements, supports readers in recognizing the political context of their mental health struggles and potential for resistance to

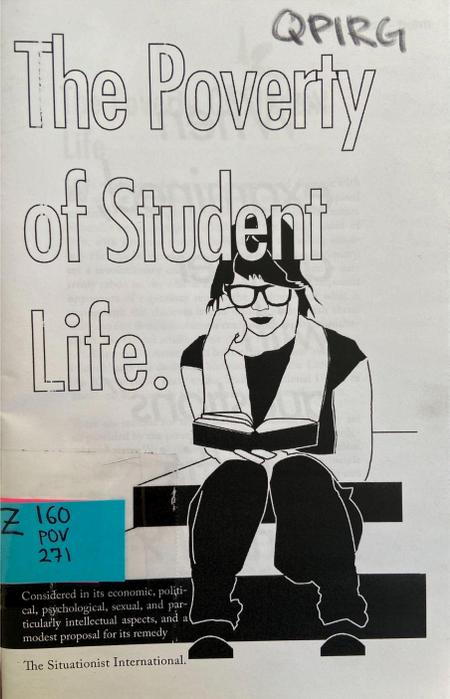
harmful structures. Its personal stories remind readers that we are not alone and encourage empathy for different experiences. Its practical guides provide useful instruction for self-care and autonomous decision-making. Taken together, these zines are depathologizing, liberatory, and comforting.

<b>Title</b>	Fix My Head: Issue Seven—Geography, Identity and Diaspora	
<b>Date</b>	2015	
<b>Author/s</b>	Fernando Peña, Anna Vo, Lee Yoresh, Andy Panda, Abidin Kusno, MZ, Jonas Cannon, Parastou, Joyce Day, Taring Padi, Zacharias Szumer, Ferna, Across Eternal Wastelands, Anya Liao, Joyce Hatton, Fabi Romero, Jess Kealiihoalani, Toshie Mease, Adam Matlock, Josie Dawson	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 310 FIXM 417	
<b>Subjects</b>	geography; identity; migrants	
<b>Description</b>	Full-page zine; black-and-white text, photographs, drawings and comics; various authors; essays, interviews, poems and comics on themes of geography, identity and diaspora.	
<b>Pages</b>	15	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 11	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

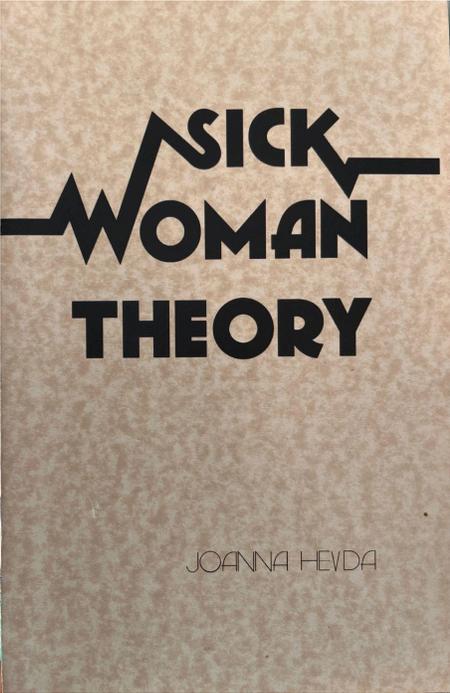
<b>Title</b>	Harm Reduction Guide to Coming Off Psychiatric Drugs	
<b>Date</b>	2007	
<b>Author/s</b>	Will Hall	
<b>Publisher</b>	The Icarus Project and Freedom Center	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 170 AWA 426	
<b>Subjects</b>	psychiatric drugs; mental health; medical system	
<b>Description</b>	Full-page zine; black-and-white text and images; anti-establishment survey of psychiatric medicine with instructions for coming off of psychiatric drugs; focus on harm reduction.	
<b>Pages</b>	40	
<b>Dimensions</b>	7 x 8.5	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

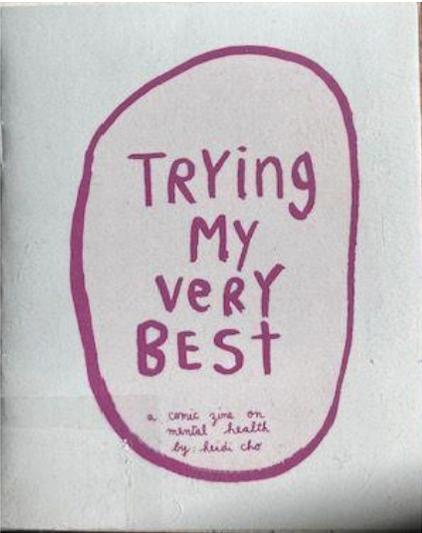
<b>Title</b>	Mapping our Madness: A Workbook for Navigating Crisis, Extreme States, or Just Foul Moods	
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Author/s</b>	Momo	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 200 MAP	
<b>Subjects</b>	mental health; self care; coping methods; personal reflections	
<b>Description</b>	Half page zine; black-and-white text with open lined space; A fillable workbook designed with thoughtful prompts to support your mental health journey.	
<b>Pages</b>	22	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

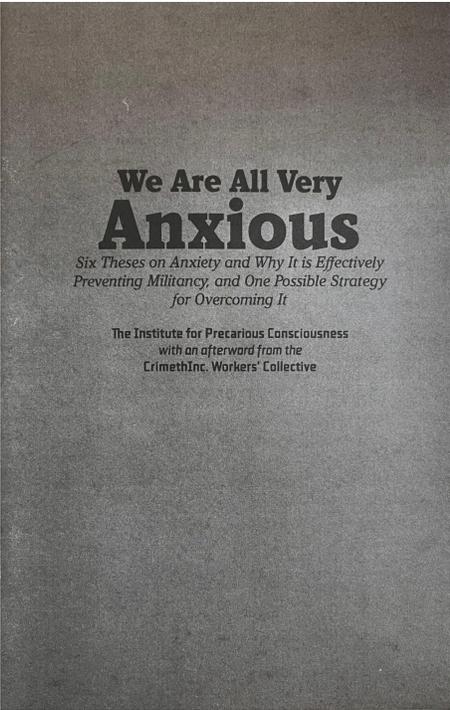
<b>Title</b>	Pathologize This!: A Mental Health Zine	
<b>Date</b>	2008	
<b>Author/s</b>	Various Artists	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 200 PAT	
<b>Subjects</b>	mental health; mental disorders; personal stories; coping methods; marginalized groups	
<b>Description</b>	Half page zine; black-and-white text; A compilation of personal stories assembled by a group of students living in Montreal. Features work from various authors (some anonymous) sharing their experiences with mental health challenges, and the various stigmas surrounding them. Content warning: Sexual assault.	
<b>Pages</b>	27	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

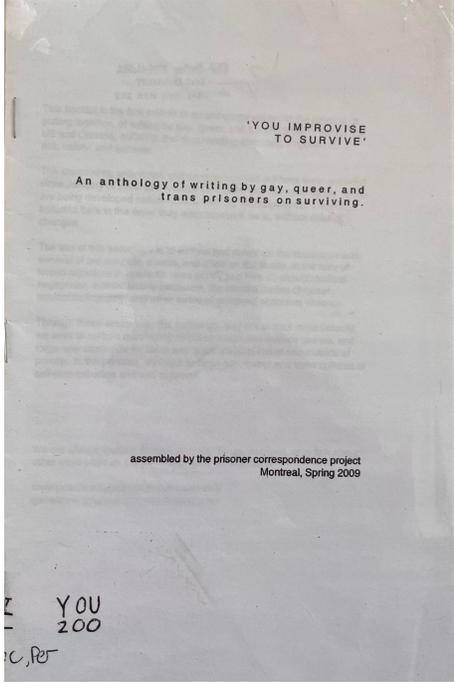
<b>Title</b>	The Poverty of Student Life	
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Author/s</b>	The Situationist International	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 160 POV 271	
<b>Subjects</b>	youth activism; alienation; capitalism; politics; students; history	
<b>Description</b>	Half page zine; black-and-white text; Originally distributed in 1966; A critique of how students, despite recognizing and opposing the social and political systems around them, become unwilling participants and commodities in capitalist society.	
<b>Pages</b>	34	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired: The Politics of Black Women's Health; New Technologies and New Issues in Reproductive Control	
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Author/s</b>	Youth Greens, Angela Davis, Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 610 SIC	
<b>Subjects</b>	women's health; anti-racism; medical system; motherhood; reproductive rights	
<b>Description</b>	Half page zine; black-and-white text; A compilation of two works: one by Angela Davis, resisting systemic racism in healthcare and its continued harm to Black women, and another by the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse, describing different paths to motherhood while advocating for women's reproductive rights.	
<b>Pages</b>	25	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Sick Woman Theory	
<b>Date</b>	2017	
<b>Author/s</b>	Joanna Hevda	
<b>Publisher</b>	No New Ideas Press	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>		
<b>Subjects</b>	mental health; disability; theory; politics, gender	
<b>Description</b>	Half-page zine; black-and-white text; essay on the devaluation of people with disabilities and chronic illness, promotes practices of care as anti-capitalist protest.	
<b>Pages</b>	19	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Trying My Very Best: A comic zine on mental health	
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Author/s</b>	Heidi Cho	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 200 TRY	
<b>Subjects</b>	mental health; depression; coping methods	
<b>Description</b>	Small booklet; colour drawings and text; short comic about depression and coping.	
<b>Pages</b>	20	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5 x 6 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	We Are All Very Anxious: Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It Is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It	
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Author/s</b>	The Institute for Precarious Consciousness, CrimethInc. Workers' Collective	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>		
<b>Subjects</b>	anxiety; activism; capitalism	
<b>Description</b>	Half-page zine; black-and-white text; text on dominant effects of capitalism, including anxiety in its current phase, how it prevents militancy and how to overcome it.	
<b>Pages</b>	13	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	You Improvise to Survive: An anthology of writing by gay, queer, and trans prisoners on surviving.	
<b>Date</b>	Spring 2009	
<b>Author/s</b>	The Prisoner Correspondence Project, Amazon (alias "ChiChi"), Matt Jones	
<b>Publisher</b>	The Prisoner Correspondence Project	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 200 YOU	
<b>Subjects</b>	prisoner writing; safer sex; survival; queer	
<b>Description</b>	Half-page zine; black-and-white text; correspondence from two prisoners as part of a safer sex resource series.	
<b>Pages</b>	11	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

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