

onset and in a third the syndrome runs an episodic course. In a majority symptoms commence in the late teens.

Depersonalisation-inducing drugs include alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy, lysergic acid diethylamide and ketamine, with the principal comorbid psychiatric disorders being anxiety and depression, but rarely schizophrenia. Associated neurological disorders, as well as the widely known temporal lobe epilepsy, include migraine, head injury and hypersomnia syndromes. There are anecdotal reports of response to various medications, but the author concedes that there is no officially recognised pharmacotherapy. Improvement is also reported with both psychodynamic and cognitive-based psychotherapies, and abreaction. Neurochemical studies suggest effects on brain serotonin, opioid and glutamate systems, and brain imaging reveals increased activity in prefrontal regions and reduced activity within the limbic system. In a final chapter the author attempts to 'pull the threads together' but, through no fault of his, this is long on speculation and short on evidence. The Cambridge Depersonalization Scale, introduced in 2000 by the author in collaboration with Berrios, is usefully included as an appendix.

Sierra's claim that more has been learnt about depersonalisation in the past decade than in the previous century is credible, but this comprehensive overview also exposes the limitations of our current knowledge. Nevertheless, it contains much to interest and educate all who contend with the condition, whether as patient or therapist.

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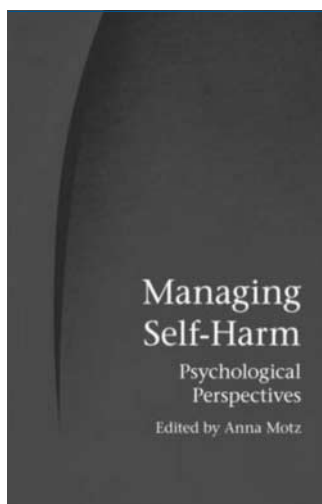
In so doing it comes as a relief to read a book that explicitly makes a powerful case for psychodynamic meaning: one key message being that self-harm is a communication that the clinician is being asked to understand and make sense of to the patient.

We are given privileged, front-row access to clinicians struggling to do just this when confronted by apparently self-destructive behaviours. We see practitioners evolving an expanding complexity in their work in a way that begins to do justice to their patients' humanity as well as their destructiveness. However they treat themselves, these patients are no longer treated as 'other'. Indeed, what the authors capture with great honesty is just how hard this work is. Yet, expertly delivered, the reader is never left behind, carrying a sense of 'I wish I could do that'. There remain profound moments of exasperation, disgust and yes, even dislike, as the therapists attempt to weave a path that is neither overindulgent (of the 'poor you' variety) nor sadistic (of the 'you've done this to yourself' variety).

If there is a quibble, it is about the book title – I do not think it sufficiently reflects the therapeutic achievement presented in this volume or wider clinical reality. Sometimes those who self-harm get beyond needing to be managed and stop self-harming. This book comes highly recommended precisely because it demonstrates how the skill, thoughtfulness and resilience required of clinicians who work with this challenging, and sometimes inspiring, patient group can bring about fundamental change.

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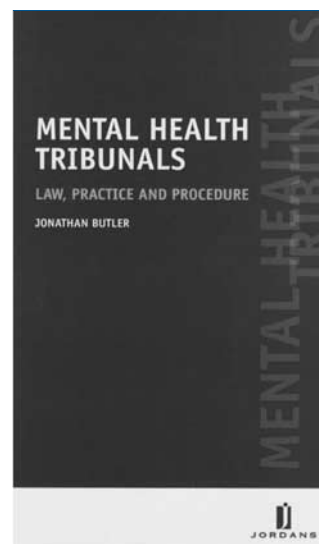


### Managing Self-Harm: Psychological Perspectives

Edited by Anna Motz.  
Routledge, 2009.  
£19.99 (pb). 248 pp.  
ISBN: 9781583917053

Reading this book brought to consciousness something I did not know I knew: namely, how far the world of psychiatry has grown professionally, from a place where people with personality disorders could be portrayed as 'the patients psychiatrists dislike' (in 1988), to a point where the disorder is 'no longer a diagnosis of exclusion' (2003). These patients are now rightly offered therapy supported by a requisite and growing evidence base. A similar fate has also been bestowed on those who self-harm, who in many cases themselves have a personality disorder.

This book, carefully edited by Anna Motz, contains papers from practitioners working in different settings and represents a growing body of clinical work that reflects these developments.



### Mental Health Tribunals: Law, Practice and Procedure

By Jonathan Butler.  
Jordan Publishing, 2009.  
£65.00 (pb). 489 pp.  
ISBN: 9781846611391

The changes to the mental health review tribunal in 2008 were overshadowed by those to the Mental Health Act. The tribunals service acknowledges that the change has few implications for patients, hospitals or local Social Services so it is perhaps difficult to raise expectations in this audience for this book. Most people are aware that there is no longer any such thing as the mental health review tribunal (although struggle with what to call its successor) but as other changes are related to practice and procedure, this book should be a useful adjunct to the information readily available on changes to the law relating to mental health.