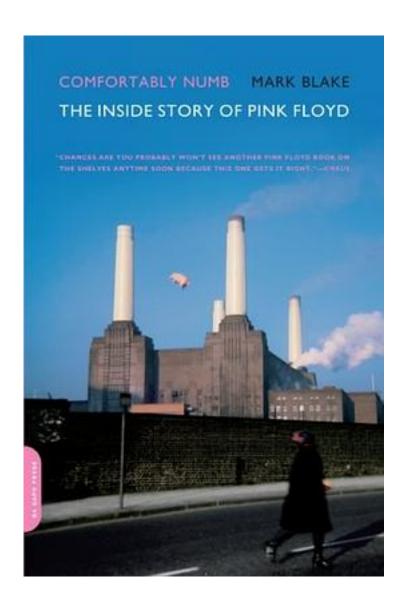
Comfortably Numb



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Public perceptions of mental health issues have changed dramatically over the last fifteen years, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the rampant overmedication of ordinary Americans. In 2006, 227 million antidepressant prescriptions were dispensed in the United States, more than any other class of medication; in that same year, the United States accounted for 66 percent of the global antidepressant market. In Comfortably Numb, Charles Barber provides a much-needed context for this disturbing phenomenon.

Barber explores the ways in which pharmaceutical companies first create the need for a drug and then rush to fill it, and he reveals that the increasing pressure Americans are under to medicate themselves (direct-to-consumer advertising, fewer nondrug therapeutic options, the promise of the quick fix, the blurring of distinction between mental illness and everyday problems). Most importantly, he convincingly argues that without an industry to promote them, non-pharmaceutical approaches that could have the potential to help millions are tragically overlooked by a nation that sees drugs as an instant cure for all emotional difficulties.

Here is an unprecedented account of the impact of psychiatric medications on American culture and on Americans themselves.

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