

Community Life for the Mentally Ill

community life for the mentally ill

an alternative to institutional care



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Community Life for the Mentally Ill presents a social innovative experiment aimed at providing new and more participating social positions in American society for mental patients. It presents the events that occurred when a courageous group of former chronic mental patients abruptly left a hospital and established their own autonomous sub-society in a large, metropolitan area. In order to complete this experiment, the patients created a small society in the community where discharged patients could live and work. Others evaluated the effects of the newly created society upon the behavior and perceptions of its members, which is also presented here. Both the descriptive and comparative aspects of this study are presented as they occurred in real life. The book is concerned with the medical, economic, sociological, and psychological facets of these former patients' daily lives. The effects of this small society upon the neighborhood and city in which it was located, as well as its effects upon professional persons, are richly explored. Clearly defining a radical departure from standard methods for treating the mentally ill, the authors conclude that such an autonomous society can thrive in the appropriate setting; the ex-patients' chances of employment are increased and the chance of recidivism are reduced; the members' self-esteem is enhanced; treatment costs are greatly reduced; the community adjustment of all members is increased, especially among those who have been hospitalized for a long period. With new guidelines for identifying danger zones in urban settings, this becomes a critical work.

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