

# THE WRITER'S GUIDE TO PSYCHOLOGY

How to Write Accurately About Psychological Disorders,  
Clinical Treatment and Human Behavior

## Table of Contents

### **Chapter 1: Common Myths and Mistakes – A Look at Fictional Portrayals of Psychological Problems, Professionals, and Treatments**

What are the most common mistakes writers make? Read about typical misconceptions, how other writers have fallen prey to them, and how you can avoid doing the same!

### **Chapter 2: Why People Do What They Do - Learning to Think Like a Shrink**

Make your therapist sound like a real shrink! This chapter clues you in to common therapist stereotypes, shows you the differences among theoretical orientations, and supplies you with all the right buzzwords and questions. You'll also learn new ways to see and understand your characters.

### **Chapter 3: The Therapist's Profession - Degrees, Training, and Ethics**

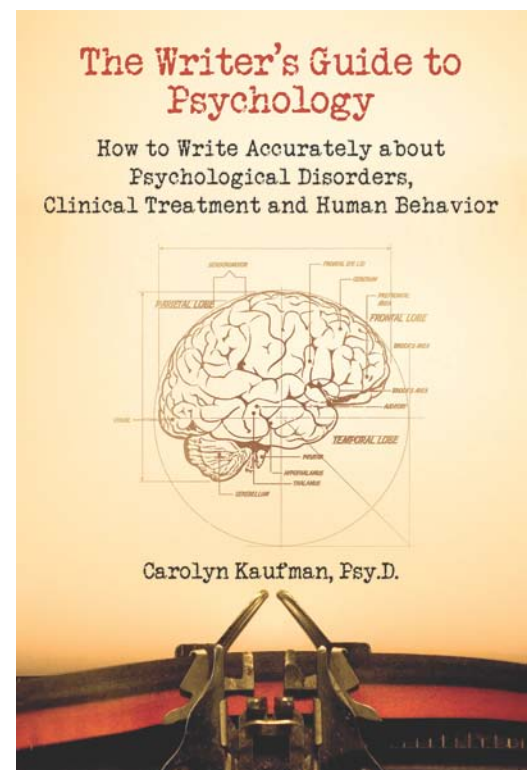
Should your character be a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a professional counselor, or a social worker? Find out how each is unique, how therapists are trained, and which ethical dilemmas can add excitement to your story.

### **Chapter 4: Behind Closed Doors - How Real Therapy Sessions Work**

Which questions do therapists ask during the first session, and why do they want to know? How can you convince characters who don't want to talk to open up? And how do therapists always seem to know what someone is thinking? Learn all the tricks your therapist needs in this chapter. Also—learn which messages your character may unintentionally be sending, what goes in client records, and how insurance companies decide how many sessions your client character should get.

### **Chapter 5: Disorders and Diagnosis – When Problems Become Disorders and How They're Diagnosed**

When does a problem become a disorder? Is someone who has the genetics for a particular disorder doomed to develop a problem? What does an official diagnosis look like? Find out when your therapist character should make a diagnosis, how to use diagnostic jargon, and how disorders can vary depending on your cultural setting.



## **Chapter 6: The Disorders Part I - Mood, Anxiety, and Psychotic Disorders**

In addition to a description of each disorder, the four disorders chapters include unusual tidbits from clinical experience and research to help you bring your character's problems to life. To help you avoid making common mistakes, misconceptions are also addressed. And treatment specifics will help you decide which type of therapy, medication, or alternative approach your therapist should use.

How are major depressions different from chronic, low grade depressions? How can your therapist character tell the difference between bipolar disorder and schizophrenia? How are creativity and mental illness related? And what is a nervous breakdown, anyway? Find out in this chapter!

## **Chapter 7: The Disorders Part II - Childhood Disorders, Dementia, and Eating Disorders**

In this chapter, you'll learn about disorders that typically appear during a particular stage of life and how to apply them to your characters. Find out, for example, the difference between ADHD and ADD, how Alzheimer's differs from other dementias, and how eating disorders are culturally influenced.

## **Chapter 8: The Disorders Part III - PTSD and Dissociation**

How is children's PTSD different from adults'? How does hypnosis work, and is it an appropriate way to force your hero to remember and deal with a trauma? Is there really such a thing as repressed memory? Why do some therapists and researchers argue that multiple personality disorder doesn't exist? Be sure your therapist is up to date on all the controversies!

## **Chapter 9: The Disorders Part IV - Personality Disorders**

In this section you'll discover which disorder might be a mild form of schizophrenia, how your psychopathic villain would be diagnosed, and why your client character may be self-injuring.

## **Chapter 10: Psychopaths and Villains - Crossing the Line**

From difficult childhoods to brain abnormalities, get all the details you need to flesh out your wickedest antagonists!

## **Chapter 11: Physical and Biological Interventions – Medications, Electroshock Therapy, and One Really Horrible Idea**

Which medications would be easiest for your suicidal character to overdose on? What is electro-convulsive therapy *really* like? How were lobotomies performed historically and when was the last one done in the US? Learn how to apply both historical and cutting-edge biological treatments to your story in this chapter.

## **Chapter 12: Emergencies in Psychotherapy - Suicidality, Homicidality, and Hospitalization**

How will your therapist decide when to commit someone who's suicidal to the hospital, and what is the hospital like when the patient gets there? When are seclusion, restraints, and forced medication used? Get all the details you need to accurately portray historical and modern institutionalization!