

# **Summary: For Therapy, a New Guide With a Touch of Personality**

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**N.B.** Due to copyright concerns, this is the summary of the original review by The New York Times first appearing here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/24/health/psychology/for-therapy-a-new-guide-with-a-touch-of-personality.html>

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**By Benedict Carey, January 24, 2006, The New York Times**

### **Overview**

A coalition of psychoanalytically oriented therapy organizations has created an alternative diagnostic manual to challenge the symptom-focused approach of the standard Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM).

# Criticism of the DSM

The DSM is built on the principle that people's symptoms are the most reliable way to classify mental troubles. It deliberately avoids speculation about: - Internal thoughts - Unconscious assumptions - Psychological roots of suffering

Researchers defend this approach as necessary for scientific standardization, but many psychotherapists find it simplistic.

**The problem:** While comprehensive, the DSM is seen as shallow and superficial—unable to capture the complexity of human motivation and depth of emotional pain. Students, clinicians, and especially patients want some guide to understanding the human stories behind symptom checklists for disorders ranging from depression to agoraphobia.

## The New Alternative: Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual (PDM)

**Unveiled:** Saturday, January 24, 2006, at the annual meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association

**Collaborating organizations:** - American Psychoanalytic Association - International Psychoanalytic Association - American Psychological Association - Four other groups (total)

**Key differences from DSM:** - Modeled on the DSM's format and title structure - Emphasizes individual **personality patterns** (masochistic, dependent, depressive types) found in many people but qualifying as disorders only at extremes - Incorporates new elements: - Case histories - Brief "psychic X-rays" showing what people suffering from mental disorders are actually feeling

## Philosophical Approach

Unlike most psychiatrists, psychoanalysts focus on: - Understanding the **meaning** of mental suffering - Exploring the **psychological roots** of problems - Rather than simply diagnosing disorders and treating with drugs or less intensive talk therapy

The PDM attempts to provide the context and depth that therapists believe is missing from purely symptom-based diagnosis.