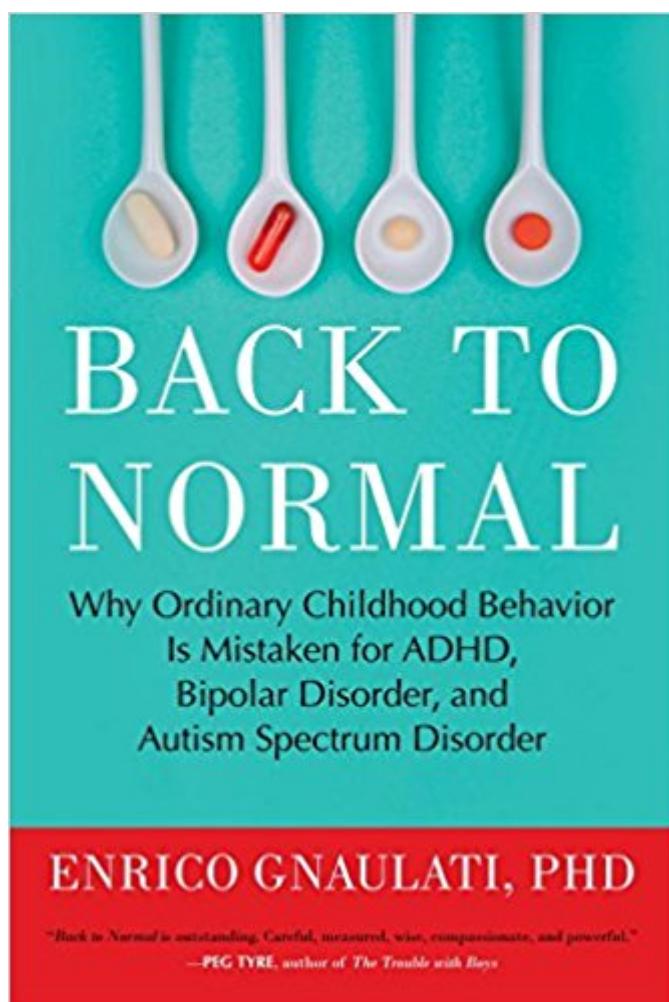


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# Back To Normal: Why Ordinary Childhood Behavior Is Mistaken For ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, And Autism Spectrum Disorder



## Synopsis

A veteran clinical psychologist exposes why doctors, teachers, and parents incorrectly diagnose healthy American children with serious psychiatric conditions. In recent years there has been an alarming rise in the number of American children and youth assigned a mental health diagnosis. Current data from the Centers for Disease Control reveal a 41 percent increase in rates of ADHD diagnoses over the past decade and a forty-fold spike in bipolar disorder diagnoses. Similarly, diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder, once considered, has increased by 78 percent since 2002. Dr. Enrico Gnaulati, a clinical psychologist specializing in childhood and adolescent therapy and assessment, has witnessed firsthand the push to diagnose these disorders in youngsters. Drawing both on his own clinical experience and on cutting-edge research, with *Back to Normal* he has written the definitive account of why our kids are being dramatically overdiagnosed and how parents and professionals can distinguish between true psychiatric disorders and normal childhood reactions to stressful life situations. Gnaulati begins with the complex web of factors that have led to our current crisis. These include questionable education and training practices that cloud mental health professionals' ability to distinguish normal from abnormal behavior in children, monetary incentives favoring prescriptions, check-list diagnosing, and high-stakes testing in schools. We've also developed an increasingly casual attitude about labeling kids and putting them on psychiatric drugs. So how do we differentiate between a child with, say, Asperger's syndrome and a child who is simply introverted, brainy, and single-minded? As Gnaulati notes, many of the symptoms associated with these disorders are similar to everyday childhood behaviors. In the second half of the book Gnaulati tells detailed stories of wrongly diagnosed kids, providing parents and others with information about the developmental, temperamental, and environmentally driven symptoms that to a casual or untrained eye can mimic a psychiatric disorder. These stories also reveal how nonmedical interventions, whether in the therapist's office or through changes made at home, can help children. *Back to Normal* reminds us of the normalcy of children's seemingly abnormal behavior. It will give parents of struggling children hope, perspective, and direction. And it will make everyone who deals with children question the changes in our society that have contributed to the astonishing increase in childhood psychiatric diagnoses.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

âœBack to Normalâ is outstanding. Careful, measured, wise, compassionate, and powerful.â • âœPeg Tyre, author of The Trouble with BoysâœAn appeal to level-headedness.â • âœAmanda Schaffer, The New Yorkerâ™s Elements blogâœDoes your stormy adolescent suffer from incipient bipolar disorder or is she simply sleep-deprived, hormonal and struggling with identity issues typical of her age? Does she need mood stabilizers, or a bedtime and therapy? Is your smart, tantrum-inclined 5-year-old an Aspergerâ™s kid, destined for a difficult lonely life, or is he just very, very bright and sensitive? Drawing on first-rate research and scholarship, Dr. Gnaulati makes a very strong case for going âœback to normal,â™ and taking care of our more challenging children in the ways that are most likely to help them, and the least likely to traumatize them.â • âœDaniel Goldin, The Huffington Post âœA valuable guide for parents and educators that includes tips on choosing a therapist and parenting strategies.â • âœKirkus ReviewsâœHighly recommended for parents, caregivers, educators, physicians, and specialists working with children of all ages.â • âœVirginia Johnson, Library JournalâœThis is an exceptionally original and useful book.â It offers fresh perspectives on a wide range of childhood behaviors that are of concern to today's parents, educators, and mental health professionals.â Addressing labels ranging from ADHD and autism to bipolar disorders, Gnaulati challenges the widespread rush to see pathology and medicate; he suggests, instead, how various behaviors may actually be expressions of normal development. With a rare combination of creative insight and common sense, Gnaulati helps us appreciate children as they grow and cope with the stresses of modern life.â • âœWilliam Crain, author of Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented SocietyâœBack to Normal provides a compelling, insightful, and timely explanation of the multiple forces that lead to over-diagnosis and misdiagnosis of our children. It offers parents a much-needed guide to help

distinguish behaviors that truly warrant medical intervention from those that may stem from other issues and require different approaches. Well done, Dr. Gnaulati! "Diane M. Kennedy & Rebecca S. Banks, authors of Bright Not Broken: Gifted Kids, ADHD and Autism Â œDr. Gnaulati suffers from an acute case of common sense. His work with thousands of children and adolescents and his scrupulous reviews of the literature lead him to question the fashionable rush to pathologize young people, to misdiagnose them, and to medicate them unnecessarily. He casts a bright light on psychiatric mispractice and reminds us of how common sense psychotherapy that attends to feelings arising in the contexts of family and school can restore the dignity of the child, alleviate anxiety, and modulate the dangerous tendency of adults to misunderstand,Â scapegoat, and rush to judgment. This is a brilliantly incisive reexamination of treatment practices by a ferociously humane practitioner." John M. Broughton, Associate Professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia UniversityÂ œThis compelling, readable book examines disordered behavior in the context of the insane policies and expectations imposed on todayâ™s children. Dr. Gnaulati describes in heart-rending detail how pressure to perform and conform in kindergarten is literally driving normal young childrenâ especially boysâ to frustration and distraction, making them hate school, and leading to a plague of misdiagnosis and unnecessary medication. Every parent and grandparent of a child labeled ADHD, bipolar, or on the autism spectrum should read this humane, common-sense guide.Â • Edward Miller, founding partner of the Alliance for Childhood and co-author of Crisis in the Kindergarten Â œThis book is a welcome antidote to an alarming trend.Â "Publishers WeeklyFrom the Hardcover edition.

Enrico Gnaulati is a clinical psychologist based in Pasadena, California. His work has been featured on Al Jazeera America, KPCC Los Angeles, and online at the Atlantic and Salon. From the Hardcover edition.

I found this book very enlightening and relevant to today's child. I had read it before but wanted to mark passages and so ordered a book for that reason. I work in a school and being forearmed with information is a valuable tool, helping to determine behaviours that could possibly be normal. More parents/carers should seriously look into this before resorting to medication as a quick 'easy fix'. I would recommend this book to parents, educators, you name it. It has lots of references of studies/surveys etc. I love the fact that references are in 'this' era! Even with a reference to Charlie Sheen. Inclusions of the technological age we are now in and its impact on children's behavior is something that people like me never imagined could and does exist. It simply wasn't around when

we were growing up. I have even compared my children's behaviour and felt somewhat relieved that....well....it was normal!Thank you Enrico!

This is a fabulous book,, written in a beautiful style, clearly articulated and advocated for today's children/teenagers, who may be going through a phase of 'growing pains' but they often perceived or misunderstood by parents or educators as if they have some kind of mental illness. The author has pointed out NOT ONLY the problem that our paranoid society has, but he also provided us with some solution, suggestion, as well as many simple, yet useful parenting tools and strategies. These are priceless tips, and it may cost a bomb just to have some professionals out there to give us a few. Before parents or educators be too quick to jump into conclusion and wanting to label or medicate a child/teen, this is a 'Must Read' book for them. Enjoy!!!

Do i think every single word in this book is universally accurate? No. However, the main themes hold 100% true. We do, as a society over diagnose in the nae of receiving services. We do judge males and females by exact equal standards when we should not. And, though medications have their place, we are chronically over medicating our population to reduce "problems" that can so easily be remedied on non-invasive, non-chemical ways. This is a great counter argument to the approach of big pharma and the quick, 10 minute diagnosis.

We came to this book as parents of a three year old boy who had recently been diagnosed with ASD. We felt that the diagnosis was incorrect, or at the very least overstated. Mostly we had this view because we had concerns about things the Psychologist failed to take into account, the process they used and their motivation for making such a finding. These are all issues addressed in this book. Our son is a gentle soul and can be easily stressed in some circumstances. Accordingly when Dr Gnaulati noted that *Many toddlers can be autistic-like in their behaviour when they are stressed.* and that *Sometimes the procedures used by experts to evaluate toddlers generate the sort of stress that leads a struggling, but otherwise normally developing, toddler to behaviour that is autistic-like.* it resonated strongly with us. In many ways this book gave us *permission* to question the diagnosis we had received and the encouragement to seek a second opinion from a professional who we feel is more cognizant of these risks in the diagnostic process. Your book also gave us some of the language we needed to be able to clearly express our concerns to this new professional.

Extremely helpful book to read. Agree that so many younger children (esp boys) are given a blanket diagnosis of ASD when certain characteristics seem like "red flags". These characteristics can instead be very normal and it is important to not give these children labels. Overall, go with your gut and instinct as a parent. Thankful I found this book!

This book was recommended to us, as we are pretty certain our boy has been misdiagnosed and honestly, it's a minefield out there, trying to navigate the medical world alongside the taxing world of co-parenting arrangements with ex-spouses and ensuring that your child gets the very best chance at life. Impressed with this book with the information it delivers. It can be a bit of a dry read at times, but definitely worth it.

Most helpful for parents of children, particularly boys, who are being medicated or segregated based on what would have been in the past regarded as simple discipline problems. We all went to school with gifted but hard to handle kids many of whom went on to lead successful lives. On the other hand there really are autistic or "asperger's syndrome who benefit greatly from early intervention.

The combination of research and practice is informative. I like the fact that the author looks at growth and development of young children through young adult.

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