

Quotes by Thomas S. Szasz

“Clear thinking requires courage rather than intelligence.”

“If you talk to God, you are praying. If God talks to you, you have schizophrenia.”

“People often say that this or that person has not yet found himself. But the self is not something one finds, it is something one creates.”

“A child becomes an adult when he realizes that he has a right not only to be right but also to be wrong.”

“Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one's self-esteem. That is why young children, before they are aware of their own self-importance, learn so easily...”

“The proverb warns that 'You should not bite the hand that feeds you.' But maybe you should, if it prevents you from feeding yourself.”

“Boredom is the feeling that everything is a waste of time; serenity, that nothing is.”

“Self-respect is to the soul as oxygen is to the body. Deprive a person of oxygen, and you kill his body; deprive him of self-respect and you kill his spirit.”

“No further evidence is needed to show that 'mental illness' is not the name of a biological condition whose nature awaits to be elucidated, but is the name of a concept whose purpose is to obscure the obvious.”

“Men are rewarded or punished not for what they do but for how their acts are defined. That is why men are more interested in better justifying themselves than in better behaving themselves.”

“The greatest analgesic, soporific, stimulant, tranquilizer, narcotic, and to some extent even antibiotic -in short, the closest thing to a genuine panacea -known to medical science is work.”

“Punishment is now unfashionable... because it creates moral distinctions among men, which, to the democratic mind, are odious. We prefer a meaningless collective guilt to a meaningful individual responsibility.”

“Although we may not know it, we have, in our day, witnessed the birth of the Therapeutic State. This is perhaps the major implication of psychiatry as an institution of social control.”

“In the past men created witches: now they create mental patients.”

“Since the Freudian revolution, and especially since the Second World War, the secret formula has been this: If you want to debase what a person is doing, call his act psychopathological and call him mentally ill; if you want to exalt what a person is, call his act psycho-therapeutic and call him a mental healer.”

“Permissiveness is the principle of treating children as if they were adults; and the tactic of making sure they never reach that stage.”

“Two wrongs don't make a right, but they make a good excuse.”

“When a person can no longer laugh at himself, it is time for others to laugh at him.”

“We often speak of love when we really should be speaking of the drive to dominate or to master, so as to confirm ourselves as active agents, in control of our own destinies and worthy of respect from others.”

“Doubt is to certainty as neurosis is to psychosis. The neurotic is in doubt and has fears about persons and things; the psychotic has convictions and makes claims about them. In short, the neurotic has problems, the psychotic has solutions.”

“The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget.”

“In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined.”

“Mental illness, of course, is not literally a 'thing' - or physical object - and hence it can 'exist' only in the same sort of way in which other theoretical concepts exist.”

“The system isn't stupid, but the people in it are.”

“Narcissist: psychoanalytic term for the person who loves himself more than his analyst; considered to be the manifestation of a dire mental disease whose successful treatment depends on the patient learning to love the analyst more and himself less.”

“Psychotherapy is a private, confidential conversation that has nothing to do with illness, medicine, or healing.”

“The ostensible validity of the DSM is reinforced by psychiatry's claim that mental illnesses are brain diseases—a claim supposedly based on recent discoveries in neuroscience, made possible by imaging techniques for diagnosis and pharmacological agents for treatment. This is not true. There are no objective diagnostic tests to confirm or disconfirm the diagnosis of depression; the diagnosis can and must be made solely on the basis of the patient's appearance and behavior and the reports of others about his behavior.”