

# MY BEAUTIFUL PSYCHOSIS

MAKING SENSE OF MADNESS



Emma Goude



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Making Sense of Madness

*Emma Goude*

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Some names of persons in this book have been changed.

This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of a physician. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

*For  
Daniel Kilroy, one of many,  
who didn't make it.*

'When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.'

—Alexander Den Heijer



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## FOREWORD

I first met Emma on the Open Dialogue training. She had agreed to film the first couple of years of our training and I had heard that she had her own previous lived experience but I knew little more. I got to know her during the course of the training, however, and it was clear that she was supportive of the change we have been trying to bring about. What I didn't appreciate, though, was the depth and degree of passion with which she felt this. And then one day it became clear.

In the middle of something we call a fish bowl—where students take turns at sitting in a circle and sharing their feelings with one another—Emma joined us. It was the end of an intense week and there was a lot of emotion in the room, but in the end, Emma was the one who moved us most. She told us about how much of her time behind the camera had been spent in tears. So much of the pain in the system that we had been reflecting on resonated with her and her own life. It was as a result of this that she felt deeply that change was needed, and she implored us to stay the course. Change wasn't going to be easy but she assured us that it was desperately needed. Many of us shed a tear hearing Emma's powerful words that day. She enabled us to leave inspired that we were on the right track. Ultimately her words served an important function in that first year of the first ever Open Dialogue training in the UK, and

that was to remind us of just how much was at stake and just how much this change meant to people.

The role of champion for change is one that Emma has now taken to a new level. Amid all the training and research and organisational shift that's needed to really make a difference, the most important thing has to be the profoundly moving stories that lie at the heart of it all. And Emma's is exactly such a story.

I didn't know much of the detail of her story before I started to read this book and I certainly didn't know anything about her talent as a writer. From the first page, however, I was hooked. The sheer ambition of what she has attempted is easy to underestimate. To really convey the richness of a human story of someone who has been through the myriad twists and turns, the highs and lows that she has, requires real skill. And yet Emma transports us wholesale into her life. We feel as if we are travelling her path alongside her and repeatedly we are lifted then dropped and then lifted again along the way. Before this book I would not have believed it was possible to convey the true depth of the kind of experience Emma has had, but now I know otherwise.

Emma's is a journey that many of us need to travel to really understand what it is like to be in her shoes. Professionals can benefit deeply from the lens Emma brings to our work, and others with lived experience can also find genuine avenues for growth and hope in her inspiring words.

Emma, I think, correctly identifies that this is a time of great change. Something is shifting about the way we view and respond to mental distress. There is an increasing understanding of the need to listen to rather than shun the voices that emerge from such experiences. Indeed, in other cultures it is exactly these voices that are heard with the most reverence. And given the trajectory that our own civilisation seems to be taking right now, we could well benefit from different approaches and world views than our current one.

At the end of another training week, towards the end of Emma's time filming our course, Emma chose to sing a song for us. It's often a time of merriment and celebration as a course draws to a close, but as Emma began to sing we all fell silent. She played a small keyboard and softly sang the Tears for Fears song, 'Mad World'. It was a message that resonated with us all in that moment. Many shed tears again that night. There is indeed much that is mad about the way we organise our society today, and perhaps it is those who we lock up—physically or

metaphorically—or marginalise or stigmatise that are, in many respects, the sane ones.

The powerful, inspiring and raw honesty of this book is truly a case in point. Often the most silenced voices are the ones that most need to be heard. My hope is that Emma's will now be.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Razzaque', written in a cursive style.

Dr Russell Razzaque  
London  
March 2019