

What Is
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DIAGNOSTIC LABELS ARE PROLIFERATING, AND MENTAL DISORDERS SEEM TO BE ANNEXING EVER MORE TERRITORY. AT THE SAME TIME, MANY PEOPLE WITH DIAGNOSABLE CONDITIONS ARE FORGING THEIR OWN ORIGINAL TAKES ON WHAT'S NORMAL.

BY PETER D. KRAMER, M.D.



➔ **DONNA FLAGG, 45**, is founder and CEO of the Krysalis Group, New York-based business consultants whose motto is "Business NOT as usual." "Everything we do challenges the status quo," says Flagg, who early on—dyslexic and labeled retarded—was sensitized to looking at everything in novel ways. "Most people think there's only one way of doing things." The only time she ever struggled, she says, was in grades K-12. "Once I got out of the system, I was free; paths opened." Trained to be a dancer, she took a side job doing makeup at Chanel—and discovered she loved the business world. After starting her own beauty company, she opted for a second chance at school and got straight As on a master's degree at New York University. "I have two businesses, two master's degrees, I wrote a book. How do you call me disabled? What's not normal about what I've been able to do?" Flagg thinks "people confuse normal with average. Why would anyone want to be average?" She believes our society "creates a lot of things that don't fit." What makes her different, she insists, is that she has chosen not to work from a "platform of inadequacy."



Photograph by **KARJEAN LEVINE**

November/December 2009 *Psychology Today* 77