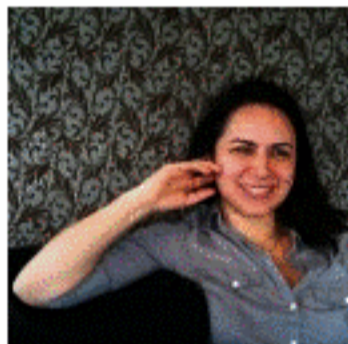


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Having Mental Health Means Sleuthing Magical Perceptions Sometimes

Posted on **December 15, 2010** by Sana Johnson-Guijada MD

Self-Care Tip #134 – Looking past the dark magic in your life might require medication. Be a friend to yourself.

Much of what psychiatrists do at work is help with misperceptions. Seeing something one way does not make it true.

In Scientific America, there was a great [article](#), "Magic and the Brain: How Magicians 'Trick' the Mind," By [Susana Martinez-Conde](#) and [Stephen L. Macknik](#) | November 24, 2008 | [17](#). It tells us that we misperceive things so easily, that people use that quality to entertain others. Magicians use it to entertain and exploit the limits of cognition and attention.

Magicians aren't the only ones to exploit that. We do. We exploit ourselves. Tsk. Not too friendly and not generally as entertaining.

How is having our misperceptions a form self-exploitation, you say? Because we nurse them and drive our own selves into the ground with them. No one else is doing it when down to the last trick.

It comes to me that when we feel disconnected from others, we are mistaken. Some magic turned us awry and we don't see the gazillion links touching us all around. When we feel worthless, when we think we are despised, when we feel singled out for suffering, that be black magic my friends. When we think our lives are so hopeless that we would be better off ending them, look for the mirrors. Look for the rabbits and top hats. We aren't seeing things right.

When I move the curtains across my clinic day, I often find medical diagnosis hiding behind. Some sort of biology giving us the slip.

My dad often told me, "Things are never as bad as they seem." I realize he was talking about this kind of magic.

Question: How have you gotten past self-harmful misperceptions? How have you seen another do it? Please tell me your story.

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