



# **An alternative to diagnosis?**

**An exploration of the Power Threat Meaning Framework**



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**Why do we need an alternative to diagnosis?**

## **Louise Holman**

**Diagnosis and mental health services – my story**

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**What is the Power Threat Meaning Framework?**



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## The Power Threat Meaning Framework

Instead of models designed for understanding bodies, the Framework applies to people in their social and relationship contexts....


.....who are acting and making meanings within their life

Along with fulfilling more effectively the general functions of diagnosis, it aims to:

- Recognise that emotional distress and troubled or troubling behaviour are, ultimately, understandable responses to a person's history and circumstances
- Restore the link between distress and social injustice
- Increase people's access to power and resources
- Create validating narratives which inform and empower people, groups and communities by restoring these links and meanings
- Promote social action

The Power/Threat/Meaning framework poses these core questions:

- 'What has happened to you?'  
(How is **Power** operating in your life?)
- 'How did it affect you?'  
(What kind of **Threats** does this pose?)
- 'What sense did you make of it?'  
(What is the **Meaning** of these



In one to one clinical, peer support or self help work this then leads to the questions:

- 'What are your strengths?' (What access to **Power resources** do you have?)
- .....and to integrate all the above:

Restoring the link between Threats and Threat Responses – a main purpose of the Framework

Psychiatric practice obscures the links between threats and threat responses by imposing a diagnosis and then ‘treating’ an ‘illness.’ The Power Threat Meaning Framework shows how we can restore those links.

At one level this is common sense.

## General Patterns within the Power Threat Meaning Framework

We can identify new kinds of patterns by putting together the evidence about the influences of Power, Threat, Meaning and associated Threat Responses. These patterns will always be overlapping, provisional and changing – because they are





**What would PTM do better?**

**What would we need to change to make PTM happen?**

**Who does PTM affect?**

**What about people who want a diagnosis?**



# Further information

## **Introducing the Power Threat Meaning Framework**

<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/introducing-power-threat-meaning-framework>

Exploring Diagnosis debates

<https://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/exploringdiagnosis/debates/>