

Mental Health and Creativity of Famous Scientists

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In this talk, I will first discuss the fundamental principals of the psychology of science as a newly developed discipline, alongside the philosophy, history, and sociology of science. Psychology of science involves the scientific study of scientific thought and behavior of both scientists and non-scientists. The first part of my talk will provide a brief overview of the psychology of science and then summarize one of my most recent studies on the topic of mental health and mental illness of famous creative scientists. The major hypothesis is that total lifetime rates of mental illness will not be elevated in scientists compared to controls but certain disorders should be (e.g., autism spectrum disorder and schizotypal personality disorder). Our research team analyzed the life-history biographies of famous (world-class) scientists and coded these for the presence or absence of various psychological disorders such as anxiety, autism/Asperger's, alcoholism, schizotypal personality disorder, and suicide. Results confirm previous research showing no overall difference in lifetime rates in mental illness of scientists compared to controls (famous athletes), but did show elevated rates of adjustment disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and suicide compared to controls.