

# Are we all mad? In his groundbreaking new book **Back to Sanity**, psychologist **Steve Taylor** claims we are

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In *Back to Sanity* Steve Taylor (<http://www.steventaylor.talktalk.net/>) (Leeds Metropolitan University) suggests that the human race is suffering from a psychological disorder, which he has coined 'humania'. The book provides a fascinating exploration of the madness of human beings – both as individuals and collectively - and explains how we can begin to heal this madness, and create a saner world.

Taylor argues that this madness is so intrinsic to us, we aren't even aware of it, but that when you start to examine our behaviour it isn't hard to see evidence of insanity. Why for example are so many of us driven to accumulate more and more wealth, status and success without any evidence that they provide us with contentment and fulfillment? Why are we restless or uneasy when not occupied, and constantly looking for distraction, as if we are incapable of just 'being'? And on a collective level, why is human history an endless, depressing saga of warfare, conflict and oppression? We now live in an age where the world's three richest people are wealthier than the 48 poorest countries combined, and where almost 800 million people are malnourished while millions of others are obese – as Taylor says, 'what could be more insane than this?'

Taylor argues that humania is the root cause of all our dysfunctional behaviour, both as individuals and as a species. The first part of the book explores the madness of human beings, looking at the symptoms of humania:

- Living outside of ourselves: our inability to just 'be' and our need to immerse our attention in something external – TV, radio, the internet or anything else that will distract us from that sense of 'lack' we feel when unoccupied.
- 'Thought Chatter': the constant stream of thoughts that whizz around our head, taking us away from the moment and often leaving us feeling unsettled and uneasy – that feeling that 'something' is amiss.
- Elsewhereness: our inability to give our full attention to the present and really live each experience (is the bride who spends hours getting ready and several more hours being photographed actually at her wedding, or is she already in the future, looking at the photographs in years to come?)
- Looking forward: we spend our lives 'looking forward' to things, not to enjoy them more but as a strategy for escaping from the present.
- The madness of constant wanting: our pursuit of increased status and wealth and the idea that we can buy our way into happiness.
- The collective madness of warfare, colonialism, inequality and social oppression (including the oppression of the female half of the human race): this collective pathological behavior can be seen as the result of the desire for wealth and status together with a lack of ability to empathize with other groups.
- The collective madness of environmental destruction: would a sane species see the natural world as nothing more than a supply of resources to exploit, and be destroying the life-support systems of our planet with such abandon?
- Group identity: because of a deep-rooted sense of insecurity, human beings have a strong need for

identity and belonging, which manifests itself in ethnicism, nationalism, religious fundamentalism and other types of group identity, which lead to rivalry and conflict with other groups.

In the second part of the book Taylor explains how to overcome this psychosocial discord. Taylor suggests practices and ways of living – including practical exercises – to help create a more harmonious inner state, so that we can begin to live inside ourselves, in the present and attain a real state of sanity.

‘Taylor is right: humans are mad as cheese. Back to Sanity shows us how to make a sandwich out of our madness and enjoy the meal.’ Oliver James, author of Affluenza

Steve Taylor is a lecturer in psychology at Leeds Metropolitan University and the bestselling author of several books on spirituality and psychology, including *The Fall*, *Waking from Sleep* and *Out of the Darkness*, which was recently featured on BBC Radio 4’s *Woman’s Hour*. He lives in Manchester with his wife and three young children.

Back to Sanity: Healing the Madness of Our Minds

(<http://www.hayhouse.co.uk/books/1848505477/back-to-sanity>) by Steve Taylor is published on 25th June 2012, £10.99 paperback, also available as an e-Book.

For press enquiries and <strong>review copies</strong> please contact Jessica Crockett – [jessicacrockett@hayhouse.co.uk](mailto:jessicacrockett@hayhouse.co.uk) or 020 8962 1248

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