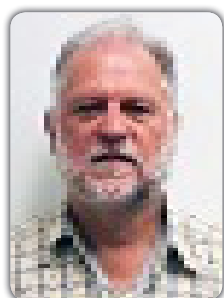


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# PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH

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### **If you continue to raise your voice, we will have to ask you to leave! Whatever happened to compassion in mental health care?**

Despite the belief that compassion is at the essence of caring and the heart of practitioner-client relationships, it is no longer a common feature of mental health care discourse. Moreover, there continues to be a gaping imbalance of power in mental health services evidenced by a lack of tolerance for difference and the imperative to deal decisively with problematic clients. This is a result of societal concerns and priorities around the need to control risk and uncertainty and an emphasis on rationalization of services and evidence-based practice. In this paper, I will discuss about how globalization and our current political climate have led to a lack of compassion that has developed in mental health practice. I argue for the need to reintroduce and support compassionate care where it can thrive and is expected. Only through the eyes of compassion can we truly understand a person who is grappling with despair, persecuted by voices or a prisoner of their fears and assist them on their journey to recovery.

### **Biography**

Michael Sheehan is currently an Executive Director at Relationships Australia, Australia and oversees its family mental health, domestic violence and child contact services. He has over 25 years of experience and held senior management positions within the community services sector, involving setting up and managing mental health, substance use and government and community services.

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