



Constructing Panic (Discourse of Agoraphobia)

Lisa. CAPPS, Elinor Ochs

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Meg Logan has not been farther than two miles from home in six years. She has agoraphobia, a debilitating anxiety disorder that entraps its sufferers in the fear of leaving safe havens such as home. Paradoxically, while at this safe haven, agoraphobics spend much of their time ruminating over past panic experiences and imagining similar hypothetical situations. In doing so, they create a narrative that both describes their experience and locks them into it.

Constructing Panic offers an unprecedented analysis of one patient's experience of agoraphobia. In this novel interdisciplinary collaboration between a clinical psychologist and a linguist, the authors probe Meg's stories for constructions of emotions, actions, and events. They illustrate how Meg uses grammar and narrative structure to create and recreate emotional experiences that maintain her agoraphobic identity.

In this work Capps and Ochs propose a startling new view of agoraphobia as a communicative disorder. *Constructing Panic* opens up the largely overlooked potential for linguistic and narrative analysis by revealing the roots of panic and by offering a unique framework for therapeutic intervention. Readers will find in these pages hope for managing panic through careful attention to how we tell the story of our lives.

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Foreword by Jerome Bruner

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Reviews of this book:

Extraordinarily creative and thought-provoking, *Constructing Panic* will open up new vistas for thinking about this disorder and related emotional disorders as well."

--Robert Emde, University of Colorado

Reviews of this book:

In a marriage of psychology and linguistics, this book makes clear that for all its frustrations as an instrument, language is potent, the primary medium for symbolizing constructions of reality. The authors are sensitive to human experience and suffering, and their linguistic insights are subtle yet vivid.

--Leon Tec, M.D., Readings: A Journal of Reviews and Commentary in Mental Health

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