

# Thomas Szasz

## Quotes

*Men, People, Self, Children, Believe, Drug, Responsibility, Love, Sex, World,  
Political, Names, Suicide, Psychology, Addiction, Doe, Giving, Age, Thinking,  
Practice*

The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget.

~Thomas Szasz

If you talk to God, you are praying; If God talks to you, you have schizophrenia.

~Thomas Szasz

Clear thinking requires courage rather than intelligence.

~Thomas Szasz

Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one's self-esteem. That is why young children, before they are aware of their own self-importance, learn so easily.

~Thomas Szasz

People often say that this or that person has not yet found himself. But the self is not something one finds, it is something one creates.

~Thomas Szasz

In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined.

~Thomas Szasz

Labeling a child as mentally ill is stigmatization, not diagnosis. Giving a child a psychiatric drug is poisoning, not treatment.

~Thomas Szasz

In the past, men created witches: now they create mental patients.

~Thomas Szasz

What people really need and demand from life is not wealth, comfort, or esteem, but games worth playing

~Thomas Szasz

Mental illness is a myth, whose function is to disguise and thus render more palatable the bitter pill of moral conflicts in human relations.

~Thomas Szasz

The neurotic has problems; the psychotic has solutions.

~Thomas Szasz

The proverb warns that 'You should not bite the hand that feeds you.' But maybe you should, if it prevents you from feeding yourself.

~Thomas Szasz

Psychiatry is probably the single most destructive force that has affected American Society within the last fifty years.

~Thomas Szasz

The FDA calls certain substances "controlled." But there are no "controlled substances," there are only controlled citizens.

~Thomas Szasz

Formerly, when religion was strong and science weak, men mistook magic for medicine; now, when science is strong and religion weak, men mistake medicine for magic.

~Thomas Szasz

When a person can no longer laugh at himself, it is time for others to laugh at him.

~Thomas Szasz

Masturbation: the primary sexual activity of mankind. In the nineteenth century it was a disease; in the twentieth, it's a cure.

~Thomas Szasz

We prefer a meaningless collective guilt to a meaningful individual responsibility

~Thomas Szasz

Psychiatry does not commit human rights abuse. It is a human rights abuse.

~Thomas Szasz

A child becomes an adult when he realizes that he has a right not only to be right but also to be wrong.

~Thomas Szasz

Self-respect is to the soul as oxygen is to the body. Deprive a person of oxygen, and you kill his body; deprive him of self-respect and you kill his spirit.

~Thomas Szasz

Involuntary mental hospitalization is like slavery. Refining the standards for commitment is like prettifying the slave plantations. The problem is not how to improve commitment, but how to abolish it

~Thomas Szasz

Boredom is the feeling that everything is a waste of time; serenity, that nothing is.

~Thomas Szasz

Psychiatric expert testimony: mendacity masquerading as medicine.

~Thomas Szasz

The greatest analgesic, soporific, stimulant, tranquilizer, narcotic, and to some extent even antibiotic - in short, the closest thing to a genuine panacea - known to medical science is work.

~Thomas Szasz

Knowledge is gained by learning; trust by doubt; skill by practice; and love by love.

~Thomas Szasz

The system isn't stupid, but the people in it are.

~Thomas Szasz

Happiness is an imaginary condition, formerly attributed by the living to the dead, now usually attributed by adults to children, and by children to adults.

~Thomas Szasz

Sex is a body-contact sport. It is safe to watch but more fun to play.

~Thomas Szasz

Men often treat others worse than they treat themselves, but they rarely treat anyone better. It is the height of folly to expect consideration and decency from a person who mistreats himself.

~Thomas Szasz

The poor need jobs and money, not psychoanalysis. The uneducated need knowledge and skills, not psychoanalysis.

~Thomas Szasz

He who does not accept and respect those who want to reject life does not truly accept and respect life itself.

~Thomas Szasz

It is easier to do one's duty to others than to one's self. If you do your duty to others, you are considered reliable. If you do your duty to yourself, you are considered selfish.

~Thomas Szasz

Men are rewarded or punished not for what they do but for how their acts are defined. That is why men are more interested in better justifying themselves than in better behaving themselves.

~Thomas Szasz

Two wrongs don't make a right, but they make a good excuse.

~Thomas Szasz

Since this is the age of science, not religion, psychiatrists are our rabbis, heroin is our pork, and the addict is the unclean person.

~Thomas Szasz

Science can give us power over nature, but it cannot give us power over human nature.

~Thomas Szasz

If the dead talk to you, you are a spiritualist; if God talks to you, you are a schizophrenic.

~Thomas Szasz

All drugs of any interest to any moderately intelligent person in America are now illegal.

~Thomas Szasz

A teacher should have maximal authority, and minimal power.

~Thomas Szasz

Delusion: belief said to be false by someone who does not share it.

~Thomas Szasz

The battle for the world is the battle for definitions.

~Thomas Szasz

Marx said that religion was the opiate of the people. In the United States today, opiates are the religion of the people.

~Thomas Szasz

Marriages are said to be made in Heaven, which may be why they don't work here on Earth.

~Thomas Szasz

Work is pushing matter around. Politics is pushing people around.

~Thomas Szasz

Permissiveness is the principle of treating children as if they were adults; and the tactic of making sure they never reach that stage.

~Thomas Szasz

A person cannot make another happy, but he can make him unhappy. This is the main reason why there is more unhappiness than happiness in the world.

~Thomas Szasz

Mysticism joins and unites; reason divides and separates. People crave belonging more than understanding. Hence the prominent role of mysticism, and the limited role of reason in human affairs.

~Thomas Szasz

We have, in our day, witnessed the birth of the Therapeutic State. This is perhaps the major implication of psychiatry as an institution of social control.

~Thomas Szasz

There is no psychology; there is only biography and autobiography.

~Thomas Szasz

The passion to interpret as madness that with which we disagree seems to have infected the best of contemporary minds.

~Thomas Szasz

People dream of making the virtuous powerful, so they can depend

upon them. Since they cannot do that, people choose to make the powerful virtuous, glorifying in becoming victimized by them.

~Thomas Szasz

The language of scienceâ€™and especially of a science of manâ€™is, necessarily, anti-individualistic, and hence a threat to human freedom and dignity.

~Thomas Szasz

Man cannot long survive without air, water, and sleep. Next in importance comes food. And close on its heels, solitude.

~Thomas Szasz

If someone does something we disapprove of, we regard him as bad if we believe we can deter him from persisting in his conduct, but we regard him as mad if we believe we cannot.

~Thomas Szasz

Adulthood is the ever-shrinking period between childhood and old age. It is the apparent aim of modern industrial societies to reduce this period to a minimum.

~Thomas Szasz

We should pledge ourselves to the proposition that the irresponsible life is not worth living.

~Thomas Szasz

The homosexual is a scapegoat who evokes no sympathy. Hence, he can only be a victim, never a martyr.

~Thomas Szasz

'Statistics' show that 66% of clients are cured with psychotherapy; what statistics don't show is that 72% are cured without it.

~Thomas Szasz



The wise treat self-respect as non-negotiable, and will not trade it for health or wealth or anything else.

~Thomas Szasz

The basic ingredients of psychotherapy are religion, rhetoric, and repression, which are themselves mutually overlapping categories.

~Thomas Szasz

He who forgiveth, and is reconciled unto his enemy, shall receive his reward from God; for he loveth not the unjust doers.

~Thomas Szasz

Mental illness, of course, is not literally a "thing" - or physical object - and hence it can "exist" only in the same sort of way in which other theoretical concepts exist.

~Thomas Szasz

Like fast-food chains, child psychiatric inpatient units and the wholesale psychiatric drugging of children, in and out of hospitals, are recent...and remarkably popular products and practices.

~Thomas Szasz

Classifying thoughts, feelings and behaviors as diseases is a logical and semantic error, like classifying whale as fish.

~Thomas Szasz

There is no such thing as mental illness, hence also no such thing as psychotherapy.

~Thomas Szasz

It taught me, at an early age, that being wrong can be dangerous, but being right, when society regards the majority's falsehood as truth, could be fatal.

~Thomas Szasz

'Psychotherapy' is a private, confidential conversation that has nothing to do with illness, medicine, or healing.

~Thomas Szasz

I submit that the traditional definition of psychiatry, which is still vogue, places it alongside such things as alchemy and astrology, and commits it to the category of pseudo-science.

~Thomas Szasz

How can depression be real if our eyes aren't real?

~Thomas Szasz

Like the devout theologian seeing the Devil lurking everywhere, Menninger, the devout Freudian, sees aggression.

~Thomas Szasz

We shall therefore compare the concept of homosexuality as heresy, prevalent in the days of the witch-hunts, with the concept of homosexuality as mental illness, prevalent today.

~Thomas Szasz

Child psychology and child psychiatry cannot be reformed. They must be abolished.

~Thomas Szasz

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