

What are your thoughts about causes of catatonia?

Dr. Northoff:

My view of catatonia is it's really a syndrome. So it's like fever or jaundice or diabetes — you can have various ways for diabetes. You eat too much chocolate, you have primary diabetes, you have other disorders; jaundice, you can have drunk too much alcohol or you can have hepatitis or other forms of liver disease.

So same thing here. My usual comparison I made — there's an old saying about ancient Rome: “All roads lead to Rome.” So here, many roads lead to catatonia. And I think the main affecting factor here is really probably the emotional cognitive capacity, because many disorders — how to cope with a disorder — puts you into the cognitive and emotional extreme realms, how to cope with it, and that then transforms into catatonic syndrome. So for me, it's really a syndrome, a final functional pathway into which many disorders, organic, bipolar, mental disorders, and so on, can converge like fever.