

Author Dr. Peter Kramer is the New Host of The Infinite Mind Public Radio Program's Eighth Season Begins April 6

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Dr. Peter Kramer, author, psychiatrist, and expert on the chemistry of human behavior, is the new host of **The Infinite Mind**, the award-winning public radio show that each week brings the latest information and in-depth discussions about the workings of the human mind to one million listeners across the nation.

Kramer is, according to *The New York Times*, “possibly the best-known psychiatrist in America.” He has written five books, the most famous of which, *Listening to Prozac*, changed public understanding about the importance and effects of legal drugs on people, society, and the American culture as a whole. Kramer’s latest work, *Against Depression* (Viking), dispels the notion that the disease is somehow romantic, poetic, or sexy, and that those who suffer from it are more intelligent, creative, or insightful than those who are happy. The book, which is due out in May, explains depression from medical and scientific perspectives and then offers a vision of how humanity will flourish after it is eradicated. Kramer practices psychiatry in Providence, where he is a professor at Brown University.

Kramer’s focus on both the scientific and the emotional causes and explanations of human behavior makes him uniquely qualified to host **The Infinite Mind**. He has built a career on exploring the scientific aspects of the human mind and how medications affect brain chemistry, personalities, and human actions. His work also investigates how emotions alter the decisions we make, the relationships we keep, and the things we do. The psychiatrist and the radio program take similar approaches; both identify a topic and then investigate and dissect it from all angles. “Psychiatry has become technically excellent and the research being conducted is very interesting, medically and biologically. The field is full of people who are integrating that knowledge in a broader perspective, and **The Infinite Mind** brings it all together, from the latest research and thinking to the quirkiest applications,” Kramer says. “I like the breadth of information brought out by the show and I like how it shapes the public view of mental illness. It brings social issues, which border on mind and brain issues, to the public eye.”

To Kramer’s point, what compels listeners to tune in to **The Infinite Mind** each week is the show’s 360-degree look at varying aspects of the mind, mental health, and humanity. Producers, hosts, and guests go beyond the headlines to find in-depth answers to bottom-line questions about how the brain functions and malfunctions. From how children learn, to why adults forget; from what it means to be a man, to why people marry, wage war, or hoard trash, **The Infinite Mind** explores the way the brain works, why humans do the things they do, and what effect their actions have on others around them and society overall. The show brings developed discussions about important, current, and sometimes controversial topics to the public in a way that is challenging, while also captivating and even entertaining. The winner of more than 30 major broadcast awards, **The Infinite Mind** is produced and distributed by the independent, multi-media company, Lichtenstein Creative Media, which was headquartered in New York City for 15 years and is now based in Cambridge, MA.

Kramer has been the guest host of **The Infinite Mind** on numerous occasions. Last year, Kramer was honored with a Gracie Allen Award for **The Infinite Mind** program “Domestic Violence,” and with the top media award from the National Mental Health Association for “In Any Language: Mental Health Care for Immigrants.” Dr. Fred Goodwin, who has hosted the program since its launch in 1997, will continue on the show as senior contributor and guest host. **The Infinite Mind** will begin its eighth season on April 6 when Kramer is joined by Goodwin on a show that highlights their favorite segments from the past. Kramer solos as the program’s new host beginning April 13. His first show investigates writer’s block, with the famously blocked Fran Lebowitz, and the prolific and rarely blocked Joyce Carol Oates. Music and conversation with Aimee Mann, and readings by actor Stanley Tucci complete the show. Asperger’s syndrome, multi-tasking, and electroconvulsive therapy will be the topics of subsequent programs in April.

The radio program explores topics from every possible angle: emotional, spiritual, chemical, scientific, medical, and social. A show entitled “The Dopamine Connection,” for example, scientifically explains why young, beautiful women marry old, unattractive men, and not vice versa (it goes beyond father figures and finances). The show also includes segments from the film *Dopamine*, and an interview with its director; an interview with anthropologist Dr. Helen Fischer on evolution and the mating process; the testimony of a man who gambled his life’s savings in reaction to his

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medication for Parkinson's disease; a medical expert from the National Institute of Mental Health who speaks to how the reward system works within the brain; a Harvard researcher who studies addiction; and finally, a humorous look at dopamine as the thought villain urging us to justify our indulgences and bad habits.

Once a topic is selected, the format is dictated by the content unearthed in the research process, says Executive Producer June Peoples. "We try not to be redundant and not to fight with breaking news. We'll wait to see which aspects of the story have gotten out there, which aspects needed more investigation, and which concepts could have been explained better. Then we create a story in a way that enables people to understand the information more organically," Peoples said. "Listeners call and say, 'Thank you for not underestimating my intelligence; thank you for challenging me to think about subjects that might not have ever crossed my mind.'" Peoples has received calls and emails from listeners who said the show literally saved their lives.

The Infinite Mind is public radio's most honored and listened to science and health program. Scientists, physicians, politicians and scholars have presented the show with many prestigious awards. But to the bartenders, school teachers, personal trainers, executives, clerks, stay-at-home-moms, and engineers who await the weekly broadcast, **The Infinite Mind** is an hour of information that helps them understand themselves, their loved ones, and human nature better than they did before. The program was an outgrowth of three one-hour-long public radio documentaries, the "Voices of an Illness" series, which Bill Lichtenstein, LCM founder, created and produced about mental illness in the 1990s, in part to change public perception about mental illness, and in part as a catharsis for his own healing. Bill Lichtenstein knows mental illness. He's been there, and back.

The Evolution of The Infinite Mind

Before he was diagnosed with manic depression, before he graduated from the Columbia J School, and before he enticed Peoples to leave her award-winning career in newspapers, and then married her, Bill Lichtenstein was a kid who was obsessed by radio. At the age of 14, Lichtenstein answered phones one night a week at an alternative radio station in Boston. From volunteer phone operator, to radio news reporter, to weekend announcer, Lichtenstein spent years working at the station, including summers while on break from studying at Brown University.

After college he went to New York where he worked as an investigative producer for ABC's "20/20." Next, he produced reports for "World News Tonight with Peter Jennings" in Washington, D.C. By the mid-80s, Lichtenstein was back in New York producing ABC TV's "Jimmy Breslin's People." During a particularly stressful time, his thoughts and mind began to unravel. Paranoid and unable to sleep, Lichtenstein ended up in a hospital, from which he was released weeks later without a diagnosis. His mother, a nurse, brought him to McLean Hospital outside of Boston, which is where he first heard the term "manic depression."

"When I told friends and colleagues I had manic depression, they stopped returning my phone calls. This was clearly not something I wanted to have," Lichtenstein said. In denial and not taking medication, Lichtenstein was hospitalized two more times over the next three years. "I was 30 years old, and I remember digging through the couch cushions for enough money to buy toothpaste. I realized then that I had two choices. I could move home to live with my parents, or I could take control of my illness and get on with my life." And so began Lichtenstein's self-education about mental illness, the start of his recovery, and the beginning of Lichtenstein Creative Media and **The Infinite Mind**. LCM's first radio documentary, "Manic Depression: Voices of an Illness," which was narrated by Patty Duke, was heard on 400 public radio stations. "The day it aired, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill got 10,000 calls. It blew out their voice mail system," Lichtenstein said. "It was a lightning rod. People wanted more."

About Lichtenstein Creative Media

Founded in 1990, Lichtenstein Creative Media is an independent media company that has extensive multimedia production, distribution, education, and community outreach experience, particularly with health, human rights, and social justice issues. The company has distinguished itself by producing films and TV and radio programs that show people can, and do, recover from serious mental illness. The work of LCM and Bill Lichtenstein have been honored with a George Foster Peabody Award, television and radio's highest honor, as well as over 60 major broadcast and journalism awards. In June 2004, LCM received the United Nations media award for **The Infinite Mind** program about war. LCM's film, *West 47th Street* brought the reality of what it is like to live with mental illness to the public. LCM is producing a film about the Hepatitis C epidemic and a film about innovative programs that help at-risk youth. For more information about Lichtenstein Creative Media, visit www.infinitemind.com or call (617) 682-3700.