

# ***Mental Health Issues as Separation and Reconciliation***

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# *Overview*

- Most people will experience mental illness themselves, or in their family and friends
- Mental illness is brain illness: patient is not bad or weak
- Created for relationships: improving mental health starts with supportive relationships
- For the patient: get professional help: medication, counseling, neurofeedback
- For family: get professional help, provide support, and self-care
- For friends: prayer, support and reconnect

# ***Mental Illness Affects both Patient and Family Instability at home and Separation from Friends***

- “My day was prescribed by how well Michael did on those tests. If he did, well, I was relieved and happy. If he did badly, I was anxious and stressed.....He was a scientist. A full professor of medicine, a doctor with an international reputation. And now, he couldn't divide 2 into 20. And then he couldn't copy a triangle. Or write a full sentence. Or tie his shoes.” from *My Great Love* in AARP Magazine October 2016
- Caregivers for patients with mental illnesses are often stressed out, have no time for themselves and separated from friends, suffering often alone and unseen, misunderstood and forgotten

# ***Mental Health Issues: Silent Epidemic that ALL of Us are Facing***

- According to a lifetime prevalence study by NIMH (2010)
  - 31% of adolescents (age 13-18) have experienced an Anxiety Disorder
  - 19% have experienced a Behavior Disorder
  - 14% have experienced a Mood Disorder
  - 11% have experienced a Substance Use Disorder
  - 22% of them experienced severe impairment in their symptoms
- 25% of US population would have depression during life time
- Hidden issues: insomnia, physical and sexual abuse, family conflicts, pornography, internet, game addiction, substance abuse, dementia, traumatic brain injury...
- Most patients are suffering alone, unable to overcome the shame that separates them from others

# ***Mental Illness is Brain Illness***

***Patient is not weak or bad, not a matter of trying harder***

- Screen shot from YouTube video by Siegfried Othmer showing SPECT photos of the brain pre-and post neurofeedback training. Not included here due to copyright issue
- Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjPzjVakyd8>
- The point is that “mental illness” reflects actual changes in the brain.
- The dysfunction with the mind or one’s cognition and behavior is a result of dysfunction in the brain which can be treated with medication, counseling and neurofeedback training.

Pre and Post neurofeedback brain scans for PTSD client  
Different illnesses will have different SPECT patterns

# *Created for Relationship*

- The greatest commandment: relationship with God and people
- Created for relationships:
  - Prefrontal cortex allows us to read and communicate with another person
  - Mirror neurons: empathy and attunement
  - Sight
  - Middle ear to filter out background noise to hear speech better
  - Larynx for speech
- When relationship works: I know you understand me and I can calm down
- When relationship fails: flight, fight and freeze
  - Earliest recorded example of flight or fight?

# ***Mirror Neurons for Attunement: Also Means Anxiety and Dysfunction Can be Transmitted***

- Photo from Mother Earth News showing the similarity between the facial expression of a couple
- Photo removed for copyright issue

# ***Family as Echo Chamber and Making Matters Worse***

One person's illness affects whole family

Person with illness further stressed by family's anxiety

And the cycle continues and the anxiety escalates

Professional help may be needed to calm everyone down and break down the separation between family and patient

# ***Living with a Brain/Mental Illness***

- Brain dysfunction impacts our emotion, behavior and our view of ourselves, the world around us and the future
  - Brain scans show differences in brain structures for people with trauma, mood disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, ADHD, stroke, traumatic brain injury, etc.
  - Mental illness may well be a misnomer: brain illness
- Bringing the brain back to within normal range would change person's affect, emotion, behavior and outlook in life
- Brain illness may be genetic, from recessive genes, and more tools are now available to manage illness
  - Medication needed for chronic illness such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia; and yes there are side effects
  - Neurofeedback can help to calm the brain with no side-effects, may reduce need for meds
  - Counseling to help to rebuild sense of self, build up support from family

# ***Living with Brain/Mental Illness: Get Professional Help***

- Biggest pay-off: get professional help to manage your illness
  - Brain illness can be quite manageable
  - You can have a productive life, albeit with some limitations
  - Meds, neurofeedback, counseling including family counseling
- Neurofeedback and counseling can help to:
  - Accept yourself as one affected but not defined by the illness, not a weak or bad person or one with a character flaw
    - Who am I now that I have a chronic illness?
  - Accept that people may not understand your illness
  - Develop a support structure of those who can understand and support you
    - Support group
    - Reconnect with friends and family

# ***Living with Someone with Brain/Mental Illness: Supportive Relationship Calms***

- Self-care, prayer, support group
- Listen to understand and empathize: supportive relationship heals
  - DO NOT think you understand how they feel
  - Listening, be curious, be attuned to the person will be HEALING and CALMING
  - Be respectful and be very careful with offering suggestions
- Consider family counseling
  - The whole family may need professional help to calm each other down, deal with sense of guilt and shame, get psycho-education
  - Easier for person with illness to accept family counseling than being singled out for individual counseling
  - Easier for person with illness to accept advice from a therapist than from family

# ***Self-Care for Patient and Family***

- **Passive/numbing**

- Illicit drugs
- Food
- Alcohol
- Sex/pornography
- Video games/TV
- Gambling
- Shop therapy
- Sleep

- **Active/engaging**

- Relaxation/mindfulness exercise
- Bible-reading and prayer
- Journaling
- Supportive social network
- Hobbies
- Physical exercise
- Tai Chi, Yoga
- Volunteering

# ***Supporting a Friend with Brain/Mental Illness: Rebuild Relationship***

- Pray for the person (and the family) with the illness
- Accept and invite the person back into fellowship
  - Accept that the person may not feel like answering e-mails or returning your call
  - Easy to give up but please don't!
- Listen but refrain from offering suggestions
  - Let the health professionals do their job

# ***Instability Affects Our Brain, Emotion and Behavior***

## ***(Reducing Odds of Mental Illness for next generation)***

- “We do not have history of mental illness in our family tree, how come?”
  - Instability in the family, e.g., family discord, frequent moves, immigration, divorce, chronic illness, abuse, domestic violence, etc. can affect a person
- Instability in family can affect our brain over time: flight or fight
- Stress can set up a person for mental illness: interaction of nature versus nurture (epigenetics)
  - Research has shown children of immigrants tend to have poorer mental health
- For patient and siblings: how to reduce odds of mental illness in next generation: reduce stress
  - Remember: mental illness come from recessive genes
  - Manage illness, psychological health to reduce stress in family
  - Provide secure relationship with children to reduce their internal stress

# *Summary*

- Most people will experience mental illness themselves, or in their family and friends
- Mental illness is brain illness: patient is not bad or weak
- Created for relationships: preventing or supporting person with mental illness starts with supportive relationship at home
- For the patient: get professional help: medication, counseling, neurofeedback
- For family: get professional help, provide support, and self-care
- For friends: prayer, support and reconnect

**Q & A**