

Making Visible Unseen Disabilities: A Talk About Mental Health

Question and Answer: Questions that were unable to be answered during the presentation session

Isn't it dangerous to recommend that people don't take medication if you're not a doctor?

There is a huge amount of danger both coming off and going on a lot of drugs. In my opinion medication is a dangerous tool that should be properly supervised when used. Also, if it works, we should never take away people tools. I know people who feel that medication saved their lives and that is a reality I cannot dispute. I think if best used medication is a tool to help people develop their own coping tools and strengths and not a end all solution to treatment like it currently is being used.

There is such a stigma on mental health, I find that people are ashamed of their mental health and seeking help for it instead of embracing it.

It's true and part of the problem is that its more socially acceptable to drink alcohol or smoke pot then it is to seek help. I've watched a lot of civil rights movements like the LGBTQ+ and IL and one thing they had going for them was celebrities and iconic figures that showed the strengths and that being different wasn't a bad thing but something that should be embraced. For me and many people I've interviewed over the years we wouldn't want anyone to go through what we did but we wouldn't want to give up our hardships either. I take pride and strength in my mental health, and I hope more people can. I think it's a blessing to be able to think differently. But we need people to understand the treatment that we are currently facing might be the problem rather than the mental health condition itself.

If I was out and about and saw an interaction like you described in your first scenario of the boys fighting-how do you recommend I respond? Try to help? Find help? Call police? What would be the best way to help?

I think you should treat the kids fighting in the same way you would if they were for lack of a better word normal kids. At what point would you call the police if its kids being kids and rough housing? At what point would you intervene with their parents or in the right itself? I feel like this scenario was to talk about how we learn social boundaries and limitations and when people do not give us the chance to fail, they do not give us the chance to grow!

Also, what are some recommendations for those of us who want to be more of an advocate for mental health? What can we do to make voices heard?

I love the Independent Living Community (IL) I hope one day that the IL community folds us in, and we can fight for a lot of the same rights and treatment paths. For instance, I'm a big believer in Quality of Life, if people are happier they are healthier. I feel like this is something that the IL community embraces! Back to the question I feel like we can do better by embracing that being different is not a deterrent but a strength. That we are all people in the end just some of us think differently. And while we may not want other to go through what we have our trails and hardships have made us better!

For many people, treatment for mental health can be financially unattainable - with or without insurance. What are your recommendations for people we serve in this situation? Do you have any resources for this?

I would start off and ask what dose treatment look like for you and your love ones? Personally, I love Domains of Life. Most my problems today are a result from the treatment I received as a child. I joke when I say Medicaid could save a fortune if each of its members were on a dating program like Match.com or whatever. I also believe in the basics: good sleep, food, exercise and self-care and lastly I've said before Quality of Life. I think your local CIL as well as the community are best to provide these things. I also know that Peer Support has some of the best outcomes and is often free there is a lot of national peer support programs as well as local most of them are free to their community as well.

Sorry if I missed if this was already talked about, but do people at CILs partner with the National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI - also, completely recognize their name is problematic)?

NAMI is the largest and most well-known organization but who are they trying to serve? Some NAMI its the individual but for many it's the family member. It would be wrong for the CIL to force someone into institutional care if that is what the family member wanted but not the individual receiving care. There are national Peer groups like National Empowerment Center, Copeland Center, The Clearinghouse and other groups of peers helping peers. I will also say I think our community is fractured at times a lot of our beliefs counter each other and some are very radical. Personally, I feel more at home in the IL community then I did in than I did in the Consumer, Survivor eXpatient (CSX) community. And yes, NAMI needs to update their name, Mental Health is a lot better than a diseases model of Mental Illness. We are not sick we are just people who think differently.