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100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

Recycling The Mentally Ill

By Virginia Bola, PsyD

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30 years ago, California, later followed by other states, decided to virtually close down the State Mental Hospitals.

There had been multiple exposures of abuse throughout the Nation's systems such as over-medicated individuals kept on back wards for years without clinical justification. However, the primary force leading to the widespread closures was economic. Providing free room, board, medication and psychiatric care to the chronic and seriously impaired mental health population was expensive and failed to result in any positive financial or political benefits.

Theoretically, these marginally functional individuals would now be cared for by a network of community service agencies that would spring up on a local basis. Unfortunately, such a network never existed and failed to develop for the same economic challenges the State Institutions had faced. Counties continued to provide outpatient services, with occasional brief local hospitalizations for those who became unstable, and nonprofit organizations were founded, and often financially foundered, to provide services.

With few resources and the cognitive and emotional inability to connect with the few programs available, the mentally ill started to drift into the streets where they often self-medicated with illegal drugs. Within 10 years, police and social service agencies estimated that possibly one third of the growing homeless population had mental disabilities.

An increase in street crime, the resentment of business owners who lost customers who would not cross the crowds of homeless on the sidewalks, and the disgust of working citizens who resented the litter and potential dangers of large numbers of people living on the streets, led to a political decision to crackdown on the homeless. Sweeps of targeted areas moved the homeless away – to other areas where the resentment was just as great. Petty street crimes to enable the penniless to live, and drug use, provided the excuse for more draconian measures. The homeless started moving again, this time into the prisons.

It is now estimated that the penal system is the largest provider of mental health services in the nation. Apart from those Institutions designed for those who have been legally determined to be "criminally insane," the system houses mentally ill individuals who may make up a third or more of the total prison population.

Building more prisons and hiring more guards is politically positive: voters want to keep their communities clean and safe and willingly pay for the fight against crime. While the murderers and rapists are held up as examples of those who need to be contained at all costs, the fact remains that a majority of the enormous and growing prison population are serving their time for drug-related activities or victimless crimes.

The mentally ill have finally been fully recycled. They are still invisible but instead of vegetating in State Mental Wards, they are caught within a system which robs them of their dignity, provides less than optimal treatment, and costs far more to the taxpayers than would well-organized and efficiently run hospitals and clinics.

This is progress?

Dr. Bola operated a rehabilitation company, developing innovative job search techniques for disabled workers, for 20 years. A licensed clinical psychologist, she directed vocational programs for the mentally ill, served as a Vocational Expert in administrative and civil court, and pioneered vocational testimony in Workers' Compensation. Author of *The Wolf at the Door: An Unemployment Survival Manual*, she can be found at: <http://www.virginiabola.com>

Mental Health Stigma -- what can we do about it?

By Sonia Devine

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What is Stigma?

Stigma is the use of stereotypes and labels when describing someone, and it is often attached to people who suffer from mental health issues. We don't fully understand how the brain works yet, but one thing we DO know is that it is an organ. Yet our society doesn't readily accept brain disorders the way we accept other organ disorders. Why is this so?

Stigma is a harsh reality for people who have mental health problems, because it prevents them from enjoying a normal and productive life. So many people today feel uncomfortable about mental health issues, despite the fact that there is growing evidence that more and more people are developing these problems. In fact, many people are so uncomfortable with the stigma that they would rather suffer in silence than get help they need.

Here are a few of the most common misconceptions about mental health problems:

- * Mentally ill people have a weak character
- * Mentally ill people are potentially dangerous.
- * People with mental illness should just "snap out of it"
- * Mentally ill people are violent

The media has only further fuelled our distorted beliefs about mental health issues. Frequently, characters on television and in the movies that have a mental illness are depicted as dangerous, unpredictable and violent.

What Are the Effects of Stigma?

If you became ill you would go to a doctor. Once you got better, you would expect to get on with life as usual. But it's not that easy for people who suffer from mental illness. Often, they can suffer from persistent rejections and exclusions by ill-informed members of the community. Some people have been denied loans, health insurance and jobs because of their history of mental health issues. Consequently, these people lose their self confidence and may develop further anxiety or depression, on top of the issues they are already facing.

I witnessed this first hand many years ago, when my brother was diagnosed with schizophrenia. The majority of his friends deserted him; they weren't able to comprehend or cope with his altered personality and erratic behaviour. Within months he went from being a popular, vivacious and outgoing young man to a shattered, isolated loner. Over the following months, I watched my brother sink deeper

into debilitating depression, which ultimately became so unbearable that he took his own life.

What Can We Do?

All of us have times when we feel depressed, anxious or angry. We might even have a series of bad days, where we think that nothing will ever go right for us and the world is against us. For a mentally ill person, these feelings do not go away.

So the answer lies in education and understanding. If you know someone who seems very emotional, down or upset, then lead by example; show compassion and understanding, and encourage them to seek help. And if you're suffering silently yourself, take comfort in the fact that you're not alone and that there IS hope.

Sonia Devine is a qualified professional hypnotherapist and success coach with a caring and committed approach to healing, who lives in Melbourne, Australia. You can find more of her information on mental health, self image, love, relationships, phobias and much more on her website



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