

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

IMAGINE WHAT IT'S LIKE...



Imagine what it's like to be a child whose profoundly depressed mother does not respond at all to a simple, "Look what I did in school today," or who suddenly switches moods, talking non-stop nonsense for thirty-six hours, and then disappears for months because she has to be hospitalized.

Imagine what it's like to be told by your father, before he goes to work each day, to keep an eye on your potentially suicidal mother when you get home from school – but he is so preoccupied that he never really explains what is going on, never asks how you are doing, and neither does anyone else.

Imagine that you must tell the man you've fallen in love with that you cannot move out of town because you must help look after your mentally ill mother since there's no decent, affordable place where she can be cared for. And by the way, this thing may be genetic, so you're not sure you ought to have children.

(From When Madness Comes Home, pp.4-5)

PLEASE LET US OUT -

I've been stripped of so much of my dignity,
that words are all I have left of me.
I've been laughed at and made the fool.
I've been used as society's tool.
I've given my work to have it thrown
in the barrels of the vast unknown.
But I have faith the time has come

when my efforts will reach the sun.
When those in hell shall know my word,
When all us crying in chains are heard.
Our brightest minds are locked inside
Our hearts are bursting, we still have pride.
We will prove without a doubt
we've much to offer, let us out!

A poem by Caroly Schwartz from Word Explosion II

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mental illnesses are physical brain disorders that profoundly disrupt a person's ability to think, feel, and relate to others and their environment. They are "no fault" disorders.
- One in every five families is affected at some point in their lifetime by a severe mental illness such a bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and major depression.
- Mental illnesses are "equal opportunity" diseases, occurring in all cultures, races, countries and socio-economic classes.
- 75 % of mental illnesses are treatable with supportive services, counseling, and medication, yet stigma and misinformation are still major barriers to treatment & recovery.
- 1/3- 1/2 of the homeless population has a mental illness.
- 90 % of persons who commit suicide had a diagnosable mental illness.
- Mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Treatment success rates for psychiatric disorders are better than those for heart disease: Depression = 85%; Bipolar disorder= 80%; Schizophrenia=60%; Angioplasty-41%; Atherectomy=52%. (American Psychiatric Association 1997)

Recovery is possible. There is help and hope!

Go to www.nami.org , National Alliance on Mental Illness for treatment and referral information, education courses and support groups.