Attitudes toward people with mental illness

Psychology

Attitudes toward People with Mental Illness A man enters a crowded chatter filled college cafeteria and suddenly the chattering dies down until there is pin drop silence.

What happened Who was the man

Did the dean just step it - No!

Did a mass murdered enter Close but not quite!

The person who entered the cafeteria was aged in his 20s, apparently just like the rest of the students sitting there, except for the fact that everybody knew him! He was Sick-o-Neal, a mental patient for the last four years, an ace student in mathematics, absolutely dumb in the rest of the subjects and having no social life. He wasn't a mass murdered, but everybody was scared of him as if he ate people for breakfast.

Does this remind you of something Is this scenario similar to ones you've encountered

If not, let me explain. We had been in our junior year in college when I actually started to hear weird stories about Sick-o-Neal. Apparently he could flip you upside down just by looking at you. He could levitate himself, make little girls cry and the best he could dodge moving bullets. These were some of his characteristics that I only got to hear about. Like everybody, I was too scared to actually go near him and I made sure that I maintained maximum proximity between us while our mathematics class. At times when I wasn't feeling scared, I felt sorry for him. Sorry that he had no friends, that he can't have fun like most of us do, that he can't live a normal life. At times I

thought of befriending him but the thought of people calling me a 'freak', just like they call him, held me back. I knew that if I so much as to talk to him, I will be pronounced as the next social outcast.

This scenario is quite often seen in public meetings. Even now if I see some person with a psychiatric problem, my first reaction is to hide somewhere or at least try not to cross that person's path. Even with people who I know would not hurt me, I try to keep my distance. Starting a conversation means smiling at them while I fell alienated inside and keeping in the conversation with them which has no head or toes is like the biggest test of my life.

Dombeck (2000) describes that stigmas related to mental health " refers to the stereotyped set of negative attitudes, inaccurate beliefs and fears about mental health issues that influence how mental health issues are understood. There is no inherent reason for why mental illness should be thought to be any more of a negative or frightening thing than any physical illness and yet it is."

The reason why we think of mental disorder this was is because we don't understand what really the problem is. The uncertainty that a person might just start to cry, hit you, curse you, hug you etc are not attached to physical problems. Since we have experienced some of the physical problems therefore we can make connection with them, and hence are certain about the outcomes of such physical diseases. But in mental health we are not sure and hence we are afraid of the unknown. (Mayo Clinic, 2007)

Associated with a mental health program or with people who know understand the problem would help me cope with people having mental disorders much more positively. I would have the knowledge about the disease and therefore would be able to understand what outcomes could result with a specific disorder. Mostly people with mental problems want to be treated like a normal person. I would try to make them feel as normal as I can by talking to them or interacting with them. The knowledge of the problem will change my attitudes towards such people and instead of avoiding them, I would be looking forward to meet them and understand how life has been treating them.

Work Cited

1. Dombeck, M. J. (May 2000) " Scapegoating and Mental Illness Stigma", Available online from the Mental Help Net at http://www. mentalhelp. net/poc/view_doc. phptype= doc&id= 686&cn= 144>, Accessed on December 14, 2007

2. Mayo Clinic Staff (2007), " Mental health: Overcoming the stigma of mental illness", Available online from the Mayo Clinic at , Accessed on December 14, 2007