

Let's talk: mental illness

[Business](#)



“ Psychopathic”, “ crazy”, and “ lunatic” are often words closely associated with mental illness. We, as a society, are harsh critics of the weak.

We often base our judgements on others' suffering and distance ourselves when they do not fit into the norm. One of the biggest influences on the way we view the world is media. From news to entertainment, media is the main source of information that shapes our perspectives. However, the truth of mental illness is often distorted by media to catch our attention. Though the media provides exposure, it also creates an exaggerated image of mental disorders, especially those with extreme symptoms such as Schizophrenia and Bipolar Personality Disorder.

The fabricated image brings many questions: What is the truth that lies beneath the artificial image? What is the suffering overlooked by society? Why are we blowing up others' hardships for our own entertainment? Why is mental illness always put into a negative light? It's time to rethink and refresh. We need to talk about mental illness. 1. Let's talk: Misconceptions One of the biggest myths circling around mental illness is violence. In the opening scene of “ Wonderland”, a man suffering from Schizophrenia goes on a shooting spree in Times Square and then stabs a pregnant physician in the stomach (Tartakovsky 1). This is where the fear of mental illness often roots.

Portrayals like these showing extreme violence of a patient tell the public that the patients are dangerous and need to be kept away. They create an unconscious discrimination against the ill. As a result, the ones seeking help become too afraid to ask. Another image often painted by media is

hopelessness. In a lot of cases, mental illnesses are shown to be grim and incurable. For example, the lead character in Monk has obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and regularly attends therapy.

However, his condition never gets better. When no progress is shown, people are driven to believe that treatments are ineffective. Even the patients themselves stop seeking help because of the belief that they will never get better. The truth is, a patient with professional counselling and appropriate medication will eventually be able to assimilate into the society and lead successful lives (Tartakovsky 1). By always putting mental illness into a negative light, we discriminate against the ones desperate for help. As they reach out their hands and speak their mind, they are not heard.

They then bottle up their pain and detach from their communities, causing a continuous negative spiral. Our perspectives are tainted by what we see around us. Therefore, we need to start identifying and eliminating distortions of mental illness. As long as mental illness is associated with the word "crazy", it cannot be pulled out of the negative light. 2.

Let's Find Out: Why? Ironically, the easiest solution to make the public rethink about mental illness is media. Given that media holds prominent power over the general public, it can easily build up a more positive image. So if it had been easy to do all along, why haven't we done so? The answer is easy: the media gives us what we want to see and we, as a society, are attracted to drama. No one wants to watch a group of patients going to support groups every week simply because it is not interesting. Call it an ugly human nature, but we are indeed naturally drawn to the "dark side".

In reality TV shows ranging from “ The Amazing Race” to “ Untold Stories of the E. R.”, clips are carefully edited and produced to offer us the most suspenseful and exciting ride with heartbreaking drama and tearjerking stories. Even knowing all of these, we still buy into the artificial productions of media. Changing the perspectives of mental illness requires us to change the negative connotations. 3.

Let's Rethink: The Positives Speaking of negative connotations, one way to change them is to look at positive figures. John Nash, a famous American Mathematician, suffered from Schizophrenia. He believed that aliens were trying to contact him through New York Times newspaper, and travelled around Europe to achieve refugee status. When he returned to Princeton, he would often write on blackboards late into night. Though his illness resulted in many downfalls, he never once let the illness itself define him.

He continued to work on his math theories and became a Nobel Prize winner for his contributions in 1994 (Schizo 1). John Nash's story denounces many myths around mental illness. He was not an uncontrollable and violent person. Even though at times his hallucinations lead to unexpected behaviour, he never acted in a harmful way. Through many hospital treatments, Nash made successful recoveries.

He picked up his ability to produce high-quality work and delivered many speeches (O'Connor 1). In fact, not only did Nash not view his illness as a hindrance, he was actually grateful: “ I can see there's a connection between not following normal thinking and doing creative thinking. I wouldn't have had good scientific ideas if I had thought more normally. One could be very

successful in life and be very normal, but if you're Van Gogh or artists like that you may be a little off" (Schizo 1). Indeed, a lot of times we are so focussed on people's suffering that we miss their brilliance.

Nash is not the only person who rose from doubts and judgements to lead a successful life. For a long periods of time, mental illnesses are labeled "excuses for incompetence". Nash is the perfect example that everyone is susceptible to mental illnesses. However, he made his suffering part of his story and growth. If media shows us this side of mental illnesses instead of portraying them as deformities, no longer do the patients have to suffer in silence.

Give them a voice, bring them out of the darkness. With open hearts, let's talk about mental illness. Works Cited " JOHN NASH INTERVIEW."

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