



Stigma around mental illness prevents steps toward resolution

Sami Luke
Business Manager

On a chilly January afternoon a girl walks to her next class. It starts in five minutes. She has tunnel vision, focusing on the pathway to her classroom. All around her in the hall, students are opening and closing their blue lockers. Suddenly, she overhears an insult: “he is so bipolar sometimes!” She thinks to herself: “Why is that a bad thing? It’s like my skin. I can’t change it.” The stigma and insecurity that comes from a mental health disorder is serious. A person affected is more inclined to contemplate suicide or maybe even carry it out according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). “Some students want to be ‘perfect’ and it really causes them anxiety/depression,” Ashley Abrams

(School Social Worker) said. One person out of five lives with a mental illness, according to NAMI. “Some people think that it means that they can not live a productive, normal [life] and that is actually far from the truth. Therapy is the number one option that the individual should do,” Abrams said.

The most common mental disorder is anxiety. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), Depression and Anxiety are often found together.

A possible reason for anxiety in teenagers is the school work they have to do.

“I think this is a very competitive school academically,” Abrams said. “When you have a standard that’s very high, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing, you do get students that do want to achieve very, very high which can also bring about some anxieties.”

Specific anxiety disorders are diagnosed based on both the severity and what the anxiety is towards. General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is worrying excessively about daily activities and life.

Panic Disorder is when a person has

random panic attacks. Those who suffer from panic disorder may also suffer from Agoraphobia or the fear of having these panic attacks.

Social anxiety disorder, or social phobia, is fear of social situations. People with social anxiety stray away from places full of people and excessively worry about social situations.

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a form of anxiety following a traumatic event. Some symptoms include nightmares, memories, avoiding talking about the event and avoiding people and

places that have to do with the event, according to the ADAA.

“Normalizing terms like anxiety and depression make it a lot easier

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to seek treatment, move forward from it or some gain coping skills,” Abrams said.

Apart from anxiety disorders, various other mental illnesses affect the population. According to the Treatment Advocacy Center, about

2.6 percent of adults suffer from Manic Depressive Disorder or bipolar disorder.

“People just sort of make a joke about [mental disorders],” Kira Billard (11) said.

A person with Bipolar disorder will have manic episodes and depressive episodes, according to The Mayo Clinic. A manic episode is characterized as a period of an elated mood lasting at least a week. In this period of time, a person will have more energy, higher self-esteem, racing thoughts and a more goal-driven attitude. A depressive episode has symptoms like sadness, loss of interest, hopelessness and fatigue. The different types of bipolar disorder are Bipolar I disorder, Bipolar II disorder and Cyclothymic disorder.

Bipolar disorder is not the most debilitating mental illnesses. Schizophrenia is a disease where people sometimes hear voices, hallucinate and think delusionally.

1.1 percent of U.S. adults suffer from Schizophrenia, according to the National Institute of Mental

Health.

Psychosis is a mild form of schizophrenia that sometimes develops in children at around the age of 12, according to Mental Health America. Triggers of psychosis can be drug use and stress. With some symptoms similar to schizophrenia.

“It gets really bad for some of these kids who are self-medicating and then using the meds they are prescribed or sometimes not using the meds they are prescribed and self-medicating as well. It can definitely heighten some of the symptoms or bring about other symptoms as well,” Abrams said.

Another debilitating mental illness is borderline personality disorder (BPD) which is distinguished by having trouble managing emotions, according to NAMI. People with BPD are more likely to have unstable relationships where they go back and forth between loving and hating somebody. Some other symptoms include: erratic mood swings, self-image issues, uncontrollable anger followed by feelings of guilt, periods of depression, suicidal thoughts and impulsivity.

61,500.00 Americans experience a mental health disorder each year, according to the National Alliance of Mental Illness

70-90% of individuals with mental illness saw improvement in their symptoms and quality of life after participating in some form of treatment, according to National Alliance of Mental Health.



Hotline Help

Winter impacts students via seasonal affective disorder

Brianna Muzzall
Business Manager

Seasonal affective disorder, also known as seasonal depression or SAD, is a type of depression that comes and goes based on the seasons of the year. SAD is most commonly diagnosed around fall and winter, and is less common in spring and summer seasons. A different and less common form of SAD, also known as summer depression, begins in early spring.

Four to six percent of people experience winter depression, and up to 20 percent of people have mild SAD during the winter according to WebMD. These numbers mean that over half a million people will

be diagnosed with SAD every year.

SAD is more common for those who live in cold and dark environments during the winter. Women are four times more likely to be affected by SAD than men.

“I think a lot of people do have it, because people are more down in the winter and people don’t want to do as much in the winter. I think it is a subcategory of depression, because I know a lot of people who are depressed and it’s not about seasons it’s more of a chemical imbalance in the brain,” Taia Vinson (11) said.

Those who struggle with SAD have multiple ways that they can work through their depression and heal.

Therapist Debra Rogell works with people who experience seasonal

depression, and says it is extremely treatable.

“People can get depressed during the winter months because there isn’t enough light. There is an interaction between light and skin, and I see a lot of people who get depressed during the winter months,” Rogell said. “It can be treated by sitting in front of a light box, taking vitamin D supplements and some take an antidepressant during the winter months.”

Therapists often suggest light therapy boxes, boxes that mimic sunlight, for 30 minutes a day. Light therapy stimulates circadian rhythms and is most helpful in the morning.

Therapy is also available to those

affected. Working with a therapist and talking about the issues (including the weather) that depress you can be a start to improving mood and decreasing depression.

Many people who feel as if they are affected by SAD could also just be experiencing sadness or have been cooped up in the winter according to Dr. Jeffrey Lieberman, the president of the American Psychiatric Association in a statement to Time magazine.

Celeste Czarnecki (12) believes that SAD is common, and experiences it when winter begins.

“I know I get [seasonal depression], and so do a lot of my friends. I think what makes winter feel sad is the lack of sun. I get sick of the clouds,” Czarnecki said.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK

The Listening Ear: (517) 337-1717

The Trevor Project: 866- 4- U- Trevor/866-488-7386

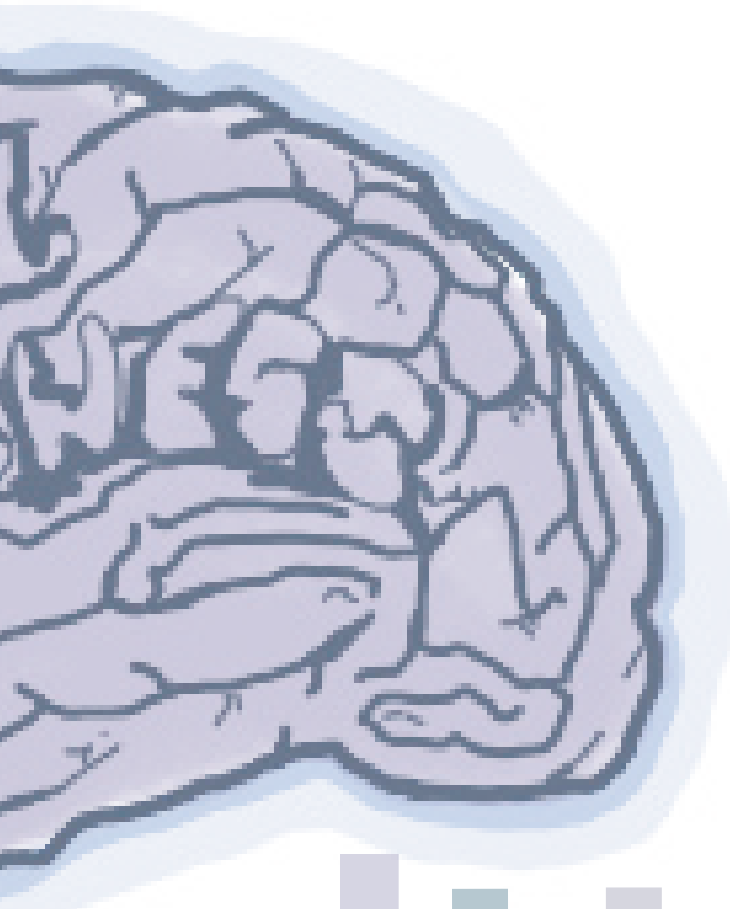
CEI-CMH Emergency Services: 800-372-8460

Adolescent Suicide Hotline: 800-621-4000

National Hopeline Network: 1-800-784-2433

Help Finding a Therapist: 1-800-THERAPIST

Youth Crisis Hotline: 800-HIT-HOME



Guest writer shares experience of loved one who struggled with mental illness

Anna Small

Guest Writer

A lot of people are good at hiding what they feel inside.

I was with my brother Jordan on Friday, June 26, the day before he took his own life. Everything seemed fine; he helped me move a coffee table into my living room, we got Slurpees and he hung out at my apartment with me for a little while.

He asked me if I wanted to go back to my mom's house with him to make some food, but I was already in the process of making food when he asked. I often wonder if things would be different if I had gone with him.

The smallest decisions in life can sometimes bear the most weight.

I never thought it would be the last day I would ever see him.

Jordan was a genuine soul, which is very hard to come by these days. He taught me that it's okay to be different and to stand out in a world that can seem so generic. He also introduced me to a whole new world of music, different from what was on the radio.

I am who I am today because of him. In a room full of people Jordan would be the one making you smile or laugh.

I think that when all of your emotions are stuck inside your head, they can definitely get overwhelming, and you may feel like you are alone or the only person who has ever felt this way. I promise you, you are not.

Sometimes it may feel like the world is collapsing from within you, but you have strength to live to see tomorrow. I promise things will get better. The things that burden you today, will most likely be insignificant in the future.

Jordan struggled with depression since the beginning of high school. He had been on and off different medications. I sometimes wonder if the medications that he was on had anything to do with the rash decision that he made.

I know he didn't mean to hurt anyone, but I have to tell you, it is the most horrible, gut wrenching, painful feeling anyone could ever feel to lose someone to suicide. You do not know why they did it or what

they were thinking, and you wish you could have done something, anything to help. I try to imagine that he is in a better place, but there is nowhere I would want him to be more than here on Earth.

You do not realize how much someone means to you until they are gone. I think many young people these days take the people in their lives for granted. There are not enough of us who tell the people in our lives that we love them, or that nothing would be the same if they were gone.

Jordan touched the lives of many people, leaving a long-lasting impression. There was no one who did not like Jordan; he cared about everyone no matter what race, gender or sexuality they were. It is from him that I learned to never judge someone or make assumptions about someone you do not know. It is okay to let your voice be heard, and be strange or weird. I learned so many things from Jordan that I will forever be grateful for.

It's important to look for signs of depression or possible suicidal thoughts. Do not look past the small signs someone may be trying to show

you or a silent cry for help. People who are not depressed may look at people who are depressed and think "oh, they should just smile and be happy."

People do not take it seriously as a disease, but depression is a chemical imbalance in the brain. Outsiders may think that the person just is not "choosing" to be happy, when really, it is a struggle just to get out of bed every day.

Whether you or someone you know struggles with depression, I encourage you to check in on someone you may be concerned about, listen to what they say, how they say it and show them kindness and support.

I think the most important thing in life is to be kind to everyone you meet because everyone is battling their own demons whether they show them or not. Suicide is devastating for families, friends and loved ones. For those of you who want to join a supportive community, my family created "Jordan's Stone Project," which is a way for us to support each other, overcome sorrow and heal. You can find us on Facebook, just search "Jordan's Stone Project."

Stress has serious effects on students

Zoya Shevchenko

Associate Editor

There is a reason millennials are often called "generation stress." High school students in 2016 are tormented endlessly by stress, presumably more than any other generation.

Waking up early, coping with school for six hours, coming home to homework or attending extracurricular activities, going to sleep late and waking up just for this demanding cycle to repeat.

To imagine any more strain added to these already demanding times is unthinkable. Unfortunately, for the 20 percent of teens who face anxiety disorders, this extra strain is made real.

Anxiety is a feeling of constant apprehension brought to daily tasks that typically are not considered "worrisome." For those unfamiliar with what an anxiety disorder is and what it feels like, a good comparison would be feeling like a fish in a bowl with a leak in it. It is a mind game that brings immense stress to its victim, often in situations that are, to typical people, "normal."

People with anxiety find it hard to describe why stress is approaching. Attempting to think rationally through an anxious moment is practically impossible, or requires far more energy than a person simply

under stress. Whether the causes

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for the anxiety are logical or not, they continue to nag.

Build-up of all of this feeling of apprehension and overthinking often results in a panic attack, or, "anxiety attack." During an attack, a person's heartbeat begins to rapidly increase, they may often experience a pain or pressure in their chest, shortness of breath, muscle weakness or numb sensation and an overall a feeling of loss of control. The severity of an attack may vary from person to person, but it is generally incredibly unpleasant.

Reasons for anxiety and panic attacks also vary. For some, panic attacks can strike out of the blue, without warning, making the experience that much more unpredictable. For others, anxiety may arise in situations that bring back past traumatic or distressing occurrences, or that make one uncomfortable, such as being surrounded by too many people

at once.

Numbers of teens with anxiety has doubled in the last 30 years and intensified educational environments only contribute to this problem for teenagers.

Like any other mental illness, anxiety is often overlooked due to a lack of physical symptoms. Though anxiety is completely mental, and there is hardly a way to distinguish a person with anxiety from a person without it, it does not lessen the seriousness of the disorder. It is arguably just as problematic as many physical or visible disorders, but schools do not take it as seriously as they should. Many students with anxiety become used to feeling alone

Simply understanding that roughly one out of every four students struggles with anxiety is enough to put things in perspective, so treating entire classroom with foresight never hurts.

in the matter, isolating themselves emotionally when symptoms of anxiety arise.

There are ways for schools to alleviate anxious situations for students, and it all begins in the classroom.

For a student to approach a teacher with their anxiety related issue can

bring stress in and of itself. Simply understanding that roughly one out of every four students struggles with anxiety is enough to put things in perspective, so treating entire classroom with foresight never hurts. Forcing students to involuntary read, speak or answer questions in front of the class often sparks intense fears and this stress can be eased by putting students into smaller groups to do the same activities. Sometimes, students are made anxious when feeling trapped in a classroom. This worry can be reduced by being more lenient when students ask to leave class or by keeping the door to the classroom open. In general, teachers who generate a less intimidating tone in a classroom can temper anxiety greatly for those students struggling.

For those students concerned with how to respond to anxiety, a good place to start would be to adopt an accepting temperament. Anxiety often brings with it worries of being judged, and a school setting can be subduing in that sense. Simply understanding that everyone is different and offering empathy to fellow students can be especially helpful.

Overall, coping with anxiety is not an easy task, and to approach it ignorantly can have lasting, destructive effects. It makes no sense to withdraw when noticing obvious signs of mental crises when physical issues are not taken lightly.

Afterall, we are all human and no matter our differences, we all deserve to be understood.