Trapped In Your Own Mind

Have you ever taken the time to educate yourself on mental illness? No, that doesn't mean articles from Buzzfeed or Puckermob. I mean actually used a legitimate source, like a health book, or a doctor. Chances are, a lot of you have not. That's one of the many problems in today's society. We toss mental illness aside, and act like it does not impact approximately 1 in every 5 adults in the United States every year (NAMI). We need to be more educated, and we can start with kids in school. The health department in school should be responsible to teach more about mental health, the signs of mental health, and just make them more aware about it.

When I took health in 5th, 7th, and 9th grade, not once did I learn anything about mental health. We spent most of our time learning about drug and alcohol addictions, which is important, but it's something a lot of us can really relate to. Of the 74.5 million children in the United States, an estimated 17.1 million have or have had a psychiatric disorder (CMI). That many kids, and we are hardly taught about mental health. Also, a lot of those kids were probably terrified of telling their parents how they are feeling because they've never heard anybody talk about it.

We also need to break the stigma about mental health. We need to stop shaming people when they call out for help. People that try to tell others that they have depression, often times hear "stop being sad", "you don't have depression, you're just having a bad day", "people are

going through worse things than you". How are we expected to get the proper help we need when we are told it's "in our imaginationation"? We need to stop shaming people about their mental health. No matter how old a person is, rather they're 10 or 30, if they come to you and tell you they're not feeling right, you should be there for them, and encourage them to go see a doctor and get diagnosed, and to get help.

Families are also affected by stigma, leading to a lack of support (Government of Western Australia). Many families feel useless because they have not had the proper education on mental illnesses, and they have no idea how they can help their child. They turn their backs on their children in the times they need them the most.

Another thing that people need to be educated on is suicide. Many feel that suicide is very selfish, on this debate website, they posted a poll that asked if suicide is selfish, and 41% agreed, and one person said, "Suicide is selfish because the person is only thinking of himself when he or she commits suicide. But he doesn't think of those who are going to be left behind to bear the grief of losing one of their loved ones. Many people say it's a mental illness, but that's not true it's the person" (Debate). Yes, suicide isn't considered a mental illness, but it is highly likely that one of the causes leading up to the person committing suicide is a mental illness. Many people that commit suicide, or attempt suicide are diagnosed, or show signs of depression. To tell someone that suicide is selfish is like telling someone with cancer that they're selfish. When a person gets in a suicidal state, they don't think straight. Their last thoughts aren't going to be, "Oh, but my mom's going to miss me. Oh well let me be selfish and kill myself anyways". Their last thoughts are normally about escaping from the pain, from the sadness, from whatever is going on in their lives, and how they have to do it quickly so they don't get caught. If the

person has a suicide attempt, do not call them selfish, or ignore the signs still. Consider that their cry of help, and get them the proper help that they need.

Another thing that people overlook is things that can lead to mental illnesses. One of the biggest ones that people know is rape. The aftermath caused by rape can take a toll on a person's mental health. Many are diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Others(not as many as the first one) are diagnosed with PTSD and depression. One thing that many people don't realize is that Alzheimer's can be counted as a mental illness. The disease and its symptoms are outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Herro).

Another thing we need to be educated on is it is not okay to tell someone to kill themselves, even if you're just joking around. Suicide is the 10th leading cause in death (Healthwise), and you never know what anyone is going through. That person could be struggling, and you didn't even know it. Telling them to kill themselves might have pushed them over the limit and they actually do it. Yeah, that's probably being dramatic and is most likely not going to happen, but you never know how it will affect them.Besides, does anyone understand how idiotic and heartless you look telling someone to kill themselves?

One thing parents should do is educate themselves so they can educate their children. Parents need to break the mental wall of "I'm trying to protect my kid", put their big kid pants on, and have a talk with their kids about mental health. It goes back to the mental stigma, we need to not be ashamed to talk about mental health and illness, considering most of us will deal with a mental illness, or have a loved one deal with it. If we don't give the children the proper education, rather it comes from the parents or the school, how are they going to be able to

educate their kids, etc. Kids are the future of America, and how are they going to be able to educate people if they don't have the proper education themselves?

Many people always joke about mental illness, saying they're depressed or they have an anxiety disorder, but were never diagnosed with it. Teenagers nowadays think having a mental illness is cool, and that if you tell people you do they'll become your friend. If you have not been properly diagnosed (no, that does not mean a quiz online about depression), then don't tell people you have one. You can say you have the signs of one, and that you should go to the doctor, but don't go around school saying you have an anxiety disorder, or depression. That is like telling everybody you're moving, but you're really not and you just want the attention. There is other ways you can go tell someone that you think you have a mental illness, but don't tell people lies. For me, I have anxiety attacks more often than I should, but I don't go telling people I have an anxiety disorder.

Many kids will also pretend to have mental illnesses to get out of stuff. I see on facebook all the time that, "I have depression but I still have to go to school" , or "I'm having really bad anxiety so I cant do my homework". Kids that actually have a mental illness will not use it as an excuse. They'll suck it up and deal with it.

One of the many mental illnesses is depression, it affects 9.5% of the population in any given one-year period (NIHP). That might not seem like a lot, but it is sadly on a rise. Chances are, you or someone you know will have depression or the beginning signs of depression in your lifetime. For children, 2 to 3 percent of children ages 6 to 12, and 6 to 8 percent of teens may have serious depression (ADAA). For that many kids to have depression, you think the education system will realize and take action in teaching more about it.

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18% of the population (ADAA). Everybody will deal with anxiety in their life, but that does not mean you have an anxiety disorder. 25 percent of all teens are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (EBH). That number is on a rise, more and more teens are being diagnosed each year. Many believe it's because of society's pressure to fit in, and all the standards people put on teens. Others believe that it is because education is getting tougher and stricter, which is making teens feel more pressured and make them lose sleep. Many teens do not know how to cope with anxiety, because we are not taught about it in school, and most of their parents do not talk to them about it. Also, many teens feel scared to talk to their parents about it, so they go undiagnosed and put their mental health at a higher risk. Anxiety can also affect a person in different ways. There are multiple different anxiety disorders known, but the main one is the generalized anxiety disorder.

Bipolar disorder affects approximately 5.7 million adult Americans, or about 2.6% of the population (DBSA). For children, it is the least likely mental disorder, and is mainly a hereditary disorder passed on from your parents. Some people with a bipolar disorder will commit suicide to get away from the symptoms. This disorder is one that many teens like to say they have, because it makes them seem cool, and makes it seem like a warning to not mess with them. Many of them do not realize how severe a bipolar disorder is, and if they learned more about it in school they would not be saying they have one.

I feel that children should be required to learn about mental health in school because most mental disorders follow a developmental course that typically starts early in life (NIMH). If it was required for schools to teach about mental health, many kids will start to understand more

about what may be happening to them, or their peers. I personally feel that bullying would decrease, because many kids will understand how many people can look stable on the outside, but is breaking down on the inside.

Also, I feel that adults, mainly teachers, should learn more about mental illnesses. Teachers are usually with their kids 5 days a week, for 9 months of the year. For many kids, they sadly would be the best option to see the change in their students behavior, and they could easily spot the warning signs.

I feel that if mental health and illnesses were taught in school, and we stopped tip toeing around the idea of mental health, we would see drastic changes. We need to break the stigma of mental health, and not be afraid, or be ashamed to talk about our health. Parents should feel comfortable enough talking to there kid, and taking them to the doctor when they are showing warning signs.

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