March 21 • 1997

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March 21 • 1997

stays every year. Yet, in spite of the fact

feared by many people and, unfortunately,

still carries a stigma (a stigma is defined as a mark or sign of disgrace.) Because

of this stigma, many people hesitate to get help for a mental problem for fear of

unfortunate that this happens because effective treatment exists for almost all mental illnesses. Worse, the stigma

experienced by people with a mental

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If you want to help remove the social

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The Myths of Mental Illness

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The Brunswickan • 9

Mental Health Awareness

The Myths Of Mental Illness

Mental illness is common. Statistics show that one in every six Canadians will have a mental health problem at illness? Here are some of the common some point in their lives. Mental illnesses myths - and truths. account for a large percentage of hospital

and dangerous. The truth is that, as a group, mentally

that every Canadian knows someone who has been, or will be, affected by ill people are no more violent than any mental illness, few people know very other group. In fact, they are far more likely to be the victims of violence than It is human to fear what we don't to be violent. understand. As such, mental illness is

· People with mental illness are poor and/or less intelligent.

Many studies show that most mentally ill people have average or above-average intelligence. Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of being looked down upon. It is unfortunate that this happens because • Mental illness is caused by a personal

weakness. A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is an illness, and it has nothing to do with being weak or lacking power. Although people with mental illness can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become ill, and they are not lazy because they cannot

just "snap out of it." Mental illness is a single, rare There are many myths about mental illness. Until people learn the truth, they

exists at all or to avoid the topic entirely. disorders. Anxiety, depression, How much do you know about mental schizophrenia, personality disorders, eating disorders and organic brain disorders can cause misery, tears and • People with mental illness are violent missed opportunities for thousands of

Canadians Words Can Hurt Words like "crazy," "cuckoo," "psycho," "wacko" and "nutso" are just a few examples of words that keep the tigma of mental illness alive. These words belittle and offend people with mental health problems. Many of us use them without intending any harm. Just as we wouldn't mock someone for having a physical illness like cancer or

heart disease, it is cruel to make fun of omeone with a mental illness. Mental Illness In The Media People with mental disorders are, often times not described accurately or realistically in the media. Movies,

television and books often present people with mental illnesses as metimes dangerous or unstable. News stories sometimes highlight mental illness to create a sensation in a news report, even if the mental illness

is not relevant to the story. Advertisers use words like "crazy" to convey that Mental illness is not a single disease their prices are unrealistically low and but a broad classification for many to suggest the consumer can take

advantage of them. You can help change the way mental illness is talked about in the media by speaking up.

Recognizing The Problem Use the STOP criteria to recognize attitudes and actions that support the stigma of mental illness. It's easy Just ask yourself if what you

· Stereotypes people with mental illness (that is, assumes they are all alike rather than individuals?)

• Trivializes or belittles people with mental illness and/or the illness itself? · Offends people with mental illness by insulting them?

Patronizes people with mental illness by treating them as if they were not as good as other people?

If you see something in the media which does not pass the STOP criteria, speak up! Call or write to the writer or blisher of the newspaper, magazine or book; the radio, TV or movie producer; or the advertiser who used words which add to the misunderstanding of mental illness. Help them realize how their words affect people with mental illness.

Reprinted from the pamphlet "The Myths of Mental Illness" with permission from the Canadian Mental Health Association starting.

If one were to ask a person on the

reet what mental disorders were, you

THE BRUNSWICKAN

Counselling Services

Counselling Services idents at UNB and St. Thomas have access to help when they need it in the form of Counselling Services. If you are a full time or part time student at either university you are able to get free and confidential help. A staff of professionally trained and experienced counsellors are available to assist student with a variety of personal counselling services.

PERSONAL COUNSELLING SERVICES

· Individual counselling is available on an appointment basis. Just call and set a time to meet one-on-one with a counsello · Couples who are having difficulties

in their relationships may be counselled together to resolve conflicts and regain intimacy.

· Worshops are offered on a regular basis throughout the academic year. For example, there could be workshops in such areas as stress management and assertiveness training. · Self-help groups are organized by

students to help themselves. Counsellors can help organize, provide meeting

CAN COUNSELLING SERVICES HELP YOU WITH? •Depression ·Family Conflict •Stress Management Trouble Concentrating •Anger

WHAT TYPES OF PROBLEMS

•Relationship Problem: ·Loss Of A Loved One •Eating Disorder

•Concerns About Drugs or Alcohol •Thoughts About Suicid ·Concerns About Sexuality

·Dealing With a Learning or Physical Disabiliy HOW TO GET HELP

To make an appointment, phone 453-4820 or drop in during regular hours. After hours, call 453-4820 and leave a message on the machine; someone will call you as soon as possible the next day

In emergencies, immediate help is available 24-hours a day. Call 453-4820 during office hours. On weekends and after hours call Security at 453-4830. The officer on duty will contact a

counsellor. Counselling Services also has other rooms and facilitate getting things services and resources such as career

services.

Social Support Groups in Fredericton

TAMMY FAULKNER THE BRUNSWICKAN

"Mental Illness!" A phrase that no one wants to hear. "That would never happen to me." A phrase used by a lot of people. "They're crazy." Wrong. ng a mental illness doesn't mean being crazy, it can happen to anyone of any age. People who have a mental illness do not necessarily look or act differently from anyone else. Chances are, you know someone who has or is ffected by a mental illness. "How can I help?" Good question. Support plays s role in recovery and in coping with long term mental illnesses.

groups. Changes is a working support group for people who have experienced or are experiencing changes in their lives and jobs due to depressive illnesses. It helps them to make the integration back into their homes, work and society. They meet on the first and fourth Monday of each month. Friends and Family of the Mentally

Ill is a self-help group for friends and family. They will be meeting the first and third Wednesday of March through May. Cheers is also a self-help group. It is

Health Association Fredericton/ individuals. All groups meet at the Oromocto Region Inc., there are several Victoria Health Centre in Fredericton. community based self-help support The Mental Health Clinic can provide referrals. They also see walk-ins and accept advocacy. They offer numerous vorkshops throughout the year. For more information on these or

> mental illness, you can contact the Mental Health Clinic at 453-2132 or the Canadian Mental Health Association Fredericton/Oromocto Region Inc. at 458-1803.

free counselling in the Alumni Memorial Building on campus. For more tion about Counseling Services informat call 453-4820.

filling up

quickly!

ould get a mixture of reactions and swers to the question from "they're uts!" to "not normal." are just a few social expressions of mental disorders If however, you asked the mental health profession there would be just as varied a response as the person on the street. Mental health is not a new phenomenon in the history of the human race. Cultures around the world have various erceptions of mental disorders, ranging rom categories of simple-minded madness, touched-by-the-gods, or ossessed by demons. The present state of social perceptions view mental orders as a medical problem; to be mosed similar to physical disorders. This is mainly a North American

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perspective, however, and is limited in its scope and breadth. It should also be oted that, for the most part, mental disorders have been associated with negative connotations. Thus we have associated labels of mental illness, deviance, perversion and retarded. This is an unfair association considering that many people have a mental disorder of some sort that can be coped with and

diagnostic element began with the early Greeks, but did not reach full fruition intil the Renaissance/Enlightenment Period. The advent of a Reform Movement in the eighteenth century saw the beginnings of a compassionate and humane treatment of those nent at all. suffering from mental disorders. The ideology though, continued along a disease-model of mental health. Today, the current focus of mental health is diagnostic and relies somewhat upon a criteria basis of symptoms. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV-Revised (DSM IV-R) is a guide for assessing and diagnosing mental disorders that are known in the world.

The DSM IV-R categorizes various mental disorders under particular effects and criteria of influence. Each axis of the manual lists types of a particular mental disorder, as well as possible symptoms, treatment successes and associations with other mental disorders. Currently, the DSM IV-R contains categories pertaining to anxiety disorders (e.g. phobias), sexual disorders (e.g. pedophilia), personality disorders (e.g. paranoia), mood disorders (e.g. bipolar syndrome), schizophrenic orders (e.g. various schizophrenias), addictive disorders (e.g. alcoholism),

developmental disorders (e.g. autism),

Mental Illnessess be assessed as a disorder of one for or another, the client's symptoms need to match a set number of found symptoms in the manual. This doesn' always provide a 100% accurate diagnosis, but is better than n

Perhaps of more importance to th person afflicted with a mental disorde is the social perceptions of having mental disability. As mentione previously, there are stigmas attache to mental disorders which have negativ consequences for the person who ha one. Some possibilities will be briefly mentioned. First, and foremost, is the feelings of difference and alienation that results from a mental disorder label. Second there is the perception that one is helpless and unable to deal with the disorder. Third is the perception, by others, that the person is dysfunctio and does not know how to handle society. A fourth stigma is the perception of the person as being incapable of having/experiencing 'normal" human emotions and perceptions. The social experiences are often quite devastating to the person' sense of self. This is not conducive to the helping process of mental health. What should be recognized is the fact that people with mental disorders and human and no different from the general population. In addition. diagnostic tools, such as the DSM IV-R, can also be debilitating in terms of labelling by particular symptoms that may not be shared by every person. Mental health is an important balance in society that needs to be addresse with care. The stigmatization of people with a mental disorder does not offer a supportive environment. Instead, one should look at ways in which treatment of mental disorders can be incorporate

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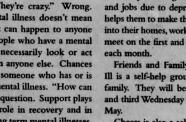
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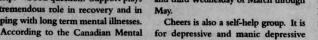
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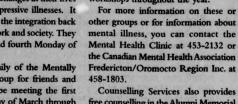
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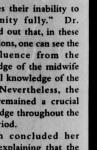
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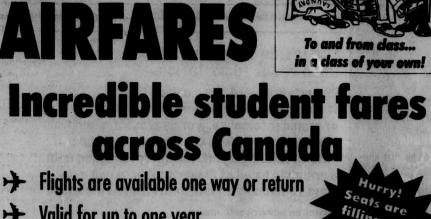
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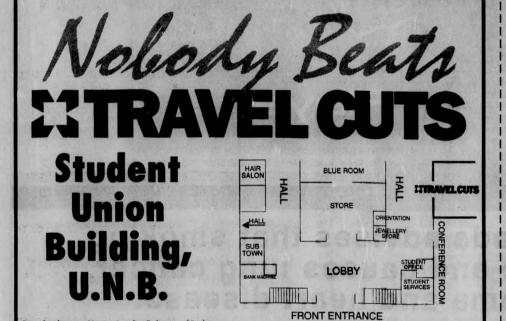
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oning in society. orically, mental disorders have a ch and varied tale. Socially, those who haved "unnaturally" were viewed in itive or negative ways depending on the social climate of the time. Religiously, societies around the globe have provided aid in one form or other to the mentally ill. Certain ligions view mental disorders as a ark of divine intercession, while others decry it a possession of evil spirits. The perception of mental health as a

childhood/adolescence maladaptive disorders (e.g. attention-deficit disorder), and brain disorders due to aging (e.g. Alzheimer's). These categories represent known symptoms and possible linkages to other disorders that could help a mental health specialist assess and diagnose a person's problem. However, it should be noted that the criteria for each category does not always reflect what a person is experiencing. The DSM IV-R is a list of symptoms and the specialist compares the symptoms of the client to that in the manual. In order to into society

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