

# Help, Healing, and Reasons for Hope

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All of You Is Welcome Here

*The*  
WOUNDED HEALER

Ministry in Contemporary Society

*In our own woundedness, we can become a source of life for others*

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN



“

.... stand in awe of what they  
carry instead of how they carry  
it...

”

Gregory Boyle, SJ

Tattoos on the Heart

Barking to the Choir

# Goals

- ▶ 1) To be reminded that you are not alone (and never have been)
- ▶ 2) To learn of the many resources and places/people/institutions to turn for help
- ▶ 3) To Understand that the most important thing you can do for your loved one(s) is to offer them your best self
- ▶ 4) To awaken to the possibility that despite the pain and sorrow, something more beautiful, authentic, and timeless is being called forth in you and your loved ones

# Agenda

- ▶ 1) Hope Now More Than Ever: the brain as the new frontier in medicine
- ▶ 2) Mental Health Challenges and how they present themselves
- ▶ 3) The myth of the “normal” family
- ▶ 4) Healthy Families and how they heal
- ▶ 5) Evidence Based Research: what helps what doesn't
- ▶ 6) Specific Situations and FAQs
- ▶ 7) When parents are mentally ill - a Child's Perspective: Leah Petrucelli
- ▶ 8) Advice from those who have carried similar burdens
- ▶ 9) Review of Resources
- ▶ 10) Right back to hope!



# Reasons for Hope

# Reasons for Hope: Daily Advances in Brain Research

“Gut Bacteria Tied to Depression” Nature Microbiology

“High-Fat Diet Linked to Anxiety, Depression” Br J Pharmacol

“Cured Meats Strongly tied to Increased Mania Risk” Molecular Psychiatry

“Novel Suicide Prediction Tool Goes Beyond Patient Self-Reports” Anxiety and Depression Association of America

“Novel Approaches to Treating Schizophrenia” Medscape Psychiatric News

“Changing How We Feel by Changing How we Think” Institute for Brain Potential

“Whole Body Cryotherapy for Depression” European Psychiatric Association

“Weekly Ketamine Infusions Keep Resistant Depression at Bay” Am J Psychiatry



# Reasons for Hope: Wiring and Rewiring Brains

- ▶ ACES: Adverse Childhood Event Study
- ▶ “Tai Chi and Qigong for Treatment and Prevention of Mental Disorders” National Institutes of Health
- ▶ “Reicki Healing and Mental Health: What the Research Shows” Public Health
- ▶ PET Scans and Electrophysiologic Brain Mapping
- ▶ Evidence that Prayer affects healing
- ▶ Evidence that Mindfulness affects healing



# How Mental Illness Commonly Presents

# Common Presentations

- ▶ World Health Organization: Depression is the leading cause of disability around the globe
- ▶ Anxiety and Depression most common diagnoses
- ▶ Life transitions as precipitants
- ▶ Childhood wounds/traumas that present as physical ailments
- ▶ Legacy wounds/transgenerational issues
- ▶ Sexual abuse (women AND men) and its legacy
- ▶ Loneliness/Lack of Community

# Common Responses Of Care Givers

- Shock
- Confusion
- Helplessness
- Inadequacy
- Defectiveness/Brokenness
- Betrayal
- Abandonment
- Isolation
- Shame
- Sorrow
- Physical Complaints
- Anger
- Resentment
- Frustration
- Dislike for
- Embarrassment
- Exasperation
- Used/Abused
- Taken For Granted
- Exhausted/Tapped Out
- Physical Complaints

## Common Responses

**GUILT**

# Common Emotions of Our Loved Ones

- ▶ Burdensome
- ▶ Guilty
- ▶ Unworthy
- ▶ Broken/Defective/Weird
- ▶ Punished for Bad Choices or Behaviors
- ▶ Bitter/Angry/Misunderstood
- ▶ Helpless/Hopeless
- ▶ Sorrowful
- ▶ Ashamed
- ▶ Culpable
- ▶ Confused
- ▶ SELF LOATHING

# How our mentally ill loved ones may act

- ▶ Irritable/Angry/Disrespectful
- ▶ Ungrateful
- ▶ Needy
- ▶ Without boundaries
- ▶ Drug seeking/using
- ▶ Not sleeping/over sleeping
- ▶ Not hungry/eating all the time
- ▶ Isolative/secretive
- ▶ Poor School/work performance
- ▶ Poor libido
- ▶ Disinterest in previous activities/dull
- ▶ Irrational
- ▶ Self Harm
- ▶ Risk Taking

The Response  
that Is Often  
Overlooked

▶ **GRIEF**





# The Myth of the Normal Family

# The Myth of The Normal Family

- ▶ Normal vs Healthy

# Healthy Families

- ▶ WHAT CONSTITUTES A HEALTHY FAMILY?
  - A Community of mutual interdependence where individual needs are met
  - A commitment to the well being of each individual and to the whole
  - Where individuals KNOW they are each unconditionally loved and unconditionally accepted
  - Where the authentic self is welcomed and nurtured (where all of you is welcome)

# Healthy Families

- ▶ Family as the “Container”
  - Hold a Safe Space
  - Hold a Vision for The Individual and the family system (mirror)
  - Uphold and transmit virtues and values:
    - “In this family we...”
  - Forgiveness is sought and granted
  - Help create and realize dreams and aspirations of the “true self”
  - Gather Regularly to problem solve
  - Gather regularly to eat/weep/grieve/laugh/sing/dance/enjoy and celebrate each other
  - Express Gratitude



# How Healthy Families Heal

“Hope and Fear  
cannot occupy  
the same space.

Invite one to  
stay.”

Maya Angelou

# How Healthy Families Heal

- ▶ Gather information/observe loved one as well as your own reactions
- ▶ Name the problem/not the character flaw
- ▶ Say it out loud
- ▶ Ask for help
  - Professional
  - Family/Friends/Community

# How Healthy Families Heal

- ▶ Normalize mental health challenges as challenges
- ▶ Role Model Problem Solving and How to Access Resources
- ▶ Contextualize mental health issues as the medical conditions they indeed are
- ▶ Continually Create and fortify “The Container” to hold the new challenge
- ▶ Welcome and honor each member’s contributions and needs
- ▶ Regularly “check in” with individuals



# How Healthy Families Heal

- ▶ Clarify The Goal: Fixing vs “Wholemaking”
  - The enemy of healing is often how we frame the problem
  - Pain is not the enemy

# How Healthy Families Heal


- ▶ They are Patient with the Process:
  - Seldom are there quick fixes
  - Diagnoses change/evolve and take time to identify
  - Medication trials and retrials are common
  - Experimenting with therapists/psychiatrists/health centers is typical
  - “Surrender” to the present situation and needs
  - Nurture a curiosity about what can unfold
  - “Her story isn’t finished being written...”

# How Healthy Families Heal

- ▶ They are patient with Each Other
  - Accept and help create “the new normal”
  - Role Model openness and frank discussions about the illness
  - Be clear on needs and how to meet them
  - Maintain Rituals: big and small
  - Maintain physical intimacy
  - Maintain emotional intimacy/vulnerability and commit to keeping each other safe


# The Two Musts of Healing

- ▶ 1) Take Care of Yourself
  - Role Model Self Love/Treat yourself the way you want your loved one to feel
  - Practice what you're preaching to your loved one: diet/exercise/sleep/self kindness/doctor appointments
  - Identify what is nurturing for you and find it - whatever it takes
  - Enforce date nights: put it on the calendar!
  - Schedule fun regularly: put it on the calendar!
  - Schedule down/nothing time: put it on the calendar!
  - Try never to say no to help
  - Keep list of needs and delegate to family or friends

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- ▶ 1) Take care of yourself (cont'd)
    - Get out in nature daily: ask for wisdom
    - Keep gratitude journal
    - Be quick to forgive
    - Forgive yourself
    - Do/learn something new: music/art/dance/poetry (and don't want or expect to be good at it)
    - Be vigilant for negative feelings/thoughts and use them to guide you toward more self care
    - Feel free to "take a break from it all"
    - Try finding activities that have a beginning/middle/end

# The Two Musts of Healing

- ▶ 2) Recognize the whole family shares the diagnosis
  - Individual therapy
  - Family Therapy



Evidence Based  
Interventions  
Which are too  
often  
overlooked

# Evidence Based Interventions: Diet

- ▶ "...On the basis of accumulating scientific evidence, an effective therapeutic intervention is emerging, namely nutritional supplement/treatment. These may be appropriate for controlling and to some extent preventing depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, eating disorders and anxiety disorders, attention deficit disorder, autism and addiction....Studies have indicated that daily supplements of vital nutrients are often effective in reducing patients' symptoms." [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)
- ▶ "Recent studies have shown the risk of depression increases about 80% when you compare teens with the lowest quality diet, or what we call the Western diet, to those who eat a higher quality wholes-foods diet. The risk of ADD/ADHD doubles. Ramsey, MD Columbia University Department of Psychiatry 2015



## Evidence Based Interventions: Dietary Supplements

- ▶ Vitamin D3 2000 iu
- ▶ Fish Oil (or other omega 3's) 2000mg
- ▶ Zinc 50mg
- ▶ Magnesium 400mg
- ▶ B complex vitamin
- ▶ Probiotic (Align?)
- ▶ Essential Amino Acids (organic meats/milk/dairy/eggs)
- ▶ Lots of others being researched: selenium, choline, calcium, iron,
- ▶ Turmeric(?)

# Evidence Based Interventions: Behaviors

- ▶ Exercise Daily
- ▶ Sun Light/Light Boxes: Northern Lights/Costco
- ▶ Maintaining Diurnal Rhythms: consistent sleep/wake cycles
- ▶ Rituals\*
- ▶ Singing/Dancing/Laughing/Howling
- ▶ Family Dinners
- ▶ Nature

\*Shepherding boys to manhood

# Evidence Based Interventions: Behaviors

- ▶ Spiritual Practices
  - Mindfulness
  - Yoga
  - Tai Chi
  - Qigong
  - Prayer - individual and group
- Forgiving someone/something
- Gratitude: Write three things daily

# Evidence Based Brain Toxins



# Brain Toxins

- ▶ Processed foods of any/all kinds
- ▶ Nitrates
- ▶ Cured Meats
- ▶ Fast Foods
- ▶ Saturated Fats
- ▶ “If you can’t pronounce it: don’t eat it.”
- ▶ “If you can’t kill it, pull it out of the ground, pull it off a tree or bush, don’t eat it.”
- ▶ Processed sugar: “the new tobacco”
- ▶ Alcohol

# Brain Toxins

- ▶ Marijuana: A whole separate lecture!
  - Grave Risk of Psychosis in at least 15% of youth
  - Worsens anxiety, depression, and suicidality
  - Decreases IQ
  - Increases car crashes
  - “If you want to smoke pot - wait until your brain is finished being made.”
- Book by Alex Berenson: [Tell Your Children](#)

# Brain Toxins

- ▶ Social Media:
  - Single greatest threat to adolescent emotional and psychological well-being (Snap Chat/Instagram)
  - Facebook causing increased depression and anxiety
- ▶ Politics - significant increase in rates of personal insecurity and negativity
- ▶ Visual trauma
- ▶ Neuroscience shows “tracks” of negativity layed down in brains



# Specific Situations and FAQs



# Special Situations: When a Parent is Mentally Ill

- ▶ Leah Petrucelli, M2 Rush Medical School

# Specific Situations

▶ If you only read two books, these are a must:

- I am not sick I don't need help! By Xavier Amador, PH.D.
- When someone you love is depressed by Laura Epstein Rosen, PH.D and Xavier Franciso Amador, Ph.D

# Siblings Needs



# Care of Siblings

- It is common for siblings to feel guilty/angry/frightened
  - They may imagine they “can catch” the illness
  - or they caused it
  - or if they are nice to the sibling it will “cure” them
- Ask Them Directly and Reassure Them
  - “No one in the family did anything wrong or bad to cause this; it is a kind of sickness in the way Sally’s brain makes her think and act. AND there are doctors and medicines that will help. We just need to be patient while her brain heals. AND your it is not your job to help fix her.”
- Explain Using the Medical Model:  
“Remember when you had the flu or when grandpa’s heart was sick...?”

# Care of Siblings

- ▶ Enlist the help/care of others to give siblings attention and respite/fun
- ▶ Let school/teachers/social workers know
- ▶ Protect time and space whenever possible
- ▶ Access Sibling Support Groups: Thrive, etc
- Create and honor “wish lists” whenever you can
- Beware of Promises: instead make commitments

# Care of Siblings

- Ask Open Ended Questions:
  - “what’s the hardest part about...”
  - “When Sally is acting up/upsetting you, what would help you?/feel good for you?”
  - “You can ask me anything at all about Sally’s illness, what questions do you have?”
- Validate Possible Feelings and Fears
  - “Living with Sally can be really hard and scary at times. Are there things that scare or worry you?”
  - “I am wondering if you worry about taking care of Sally, or me, or dad/mom. Do You?”

# FAQs

- ▶ When should I get my child evaluated if I think something is wrong?
- ▶ Is it OK for me to set boundaries when my loved one is in such pain/so needy?
- ▶ I feel guilty when I want my needs to be met, what do I do?
- My parent seems depressed; is this part of aging?
- \*When/How do I commit against my loved one's will?
- \*When does my child need residential treatment?

# FAQs

- ▶ This is all so new to me, I never know what to say or do?
  - Check in on your feeling - take a moment/breathe/pray/reset: what is your goal?
  - Learn and use the LEAP method
    - Listen Empathize Accept Partner
- Reactions/emotions are therapeutic entry points: People want to be HEARD/Validated (teens especially)
  - "That makes sense to me"
  - "Thank you for letting me know..."
  - "I really want to make sure I understand what you saying and feeling..."
  - "Help me understand..."
  - "That took a lot of courage to tell me that.."
  - "I'm not sure I have that answer now but I am committed to going to work on it. Let's set up a time to talk again."



# Special Situations: FAQs

- Things in my house are so out of control, how can I go back and start implementing any of this?
  - It is NEVER EVER too late: healing can come decades into awful dynamics
  - The deepest/truest part of all of us wants to be in loving relationship and at peace
  - “I just went to this lecture and I learned we need to hit the reset button. Mom/Dad and I are going to be working on reminding each other how precious each of us is. We need to figure out ways forward that help heal wounds and get back to healthy ways of loving each other through hard times.”
  - “I can see and hear how angry you are; just so you know, you cannot direct enough bad behavior/disrespect/anger at me to get me to stop loving you. That’s a done deal. We are going to have to keep working on some things...”
  - “This family is a place where we are all work to keep each other safe and we show each other respect and kindness; when you are ready to do that, I’ll be in my room...”

Advice from  
Others Who  
Have Been  
Where you Are



# Jean Meister's Superb Handout

## Advice from someone recovered from depression and also a mother

“I think the most important thing I would tell someone who loves a person that suffers from mental illness is that they can't control the outcome. Of course it's natural (and necessary) to do everything you can to support the person, but it's only support. You can't fix them. Letting go continues to remain my biggest lesson and challenge, not just with my son but life in general. It's probably not helpful to someone in a crisis with a loved one to say that all will be well, that suffering holds lessons and that our life is a practice of letting go, but all of that is true, I believe. On the other hand, that's all that sustains me sometimes.”

## Advice from a sibling

“Siblings like me mature much more quickly than our peers. Tell parents to remind the other children that they are still kids and there is no need to grow up so fast. Tell them to help the siblings to act whatever age they want to be.

Tell them to hold a vision for their ill child and for the other kids. They are each on their own path and their own path is not a mistake or something to be feared. It is where they are supposed to be in life. No one is defective or wrong.

Tell parents not to hide their feelings. If parents show the kids their feelings, it makes it easier for us. Otherwise we may hide our feelings to try to look OK and not worry you.

Melt downs are opportunities to display family values and be kind and united and to keep the challenged child part of the family system. They are also great opportunities to encourage vulnerability, sharing of emotions, and growth.”

# Advice from a patient who recovered from depression

“Tell them to read the book Darkness Visible by William Syron. It will help them understand what we go through and why we look and sound like we do.”

## Advice from a mother

“You are not alone. Even if your biological family/relatives are still bogged down in the stigma of mental health issues, or just don’t understand the seriousness of the situation, the people around you are often struggling with a loved one’s mental health issues and are willing to form another kind of family, or provide support to you. When you have felt the despair and received help and support from a friend neighbor or previously complete stranger, you want to provide the same kind of support for others.”

## Advice from a friend

“In my experience one of the most challenging things when accompanying a person with mental illness is how to pay close attention to my own level of anxiety. I believe it is important to cultivate strategies rooted in faith, gratitude, mindfulness or whatever the caring individual finds grounding/affirming.”



## Advice from a spouse

“Loving someone with a mental health challenge requires a delicate balance of letting that person know you are willing to speak to him/her about a vulnerable topic while simultaneously knowing when to insert (or not) your thoughts/opinions on the topic. The mentally ill person requires your love and compassion, but not advice unless requested.”

## Advice from a father

“The system of Mental Health Care in Illinois (stinks)!!

Persistence, perseverance and resilience are necessary to navigate the nonsense. Take care of your partner and your other loved ones. Let friends help and join a wine club.”

# Resources and Support



# Evidence Based Web Tools

## ▶ Apps

- Be Careful! 30,000 available, most are “poor”
- Psyber Guide
- Beware Eating Disorder Apps
- Calm App for adults and children
- New FDA approved ADHD app
- And lots more to come...

# Evidence Based Web Tools

- ▶ Websites
  - ▶ NAMI: [www.NAMI.org](http://www.NAMI.org)
  - ▶ CHADD: [www.CHADD.org](http://www.CHADD.org)
  - ▶ Institute for Brain Potential:  
[www.IBPCEU.com](http://www.IBPCEU.com)
  - ▶ Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) [www.DBSA.org](http://www.DBSA.org)
  - ▶ National Institute of Mental Health:  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
  - ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Mental Health:  
[www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth)

# Organizations

- ▶ National Alliance for Mental Illness: NAMI
  - Local Chapter
  - Family to Family Program
- FRED Parent Support Group
- ▶ Thrive Counseling Center
- ▶ Sibling Support Groups
- ▶ Hospital/Program Based for Specific Conditions
- ▶ The Well Spirituality Center, LaGrange

# Books

## Books to help you understand/work with your loved one

- ▶ \*I Am Not Sick I Don't Need Help,  
Xavier Amador
- ▶ \*When Someone You Love is Depressed,  
Laura Epstein Rosen & Xavier Amador
- ▶ How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk, Adele Faber
- ▶ You And Your Adolescent: The Essential Guide for Ages 10 - 25, Laurence Steinberg

# Books

## Books for Mindfulness/Self Nurturing

- ▶ \*Everywhere You Go There You Are, Jon Kabat - Zinn
- ▶ Loving Kindness by Sharon Salzberg
- ▶ The Courage to Heal, Laura Davis



# My pick for Transformative Books

- The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom, by Henri Nouwen
- ▶ The Wounded Healer, By Henri Nouwen
- ▶ Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry, by Carolyn Toben
- ▶ The Universe Story, by Brian Swimme PH.D and Thomas Berry PH.D,CP
- ▶ Legacy of the Heart: The Spiritual Advantage of a Painful Childhood, by Wayne Muller



# Bringing it Home

# Create the Community You Want Your Loved One to Encounter

- ▶ Commit to calling out stigma
- ▶ Commit to calling out beauty/joy/kindness/generosity
- ▶ Practice Gratitude
- ▶ Practice Kindness to yourself and all others - including all living things
- ▶ Focus attention on your family's container: what do you want to provide/enhance
- ▶ Name your pain/suffering: do your grief work
- ▶ Let Nature help heal you and your loved one
- ▶ Focus on Whole Making - let go of Fixing
- ▶ Name and honor all the great work you and your loved one are doing

**“LET THEM KNOW THEY WILL ALWAYS BE GUIDED BY  
THE SAME DIVINE POWER THAT SPUN THE GALAXIES  
INTO SPACE, LIT THE SUN AND BROUGHT THE MOON  
INTO ORBIT.”**

**THOMAS BERRY, PH.D,CP**