

Your Mental Health Journey

The journey of a person with mental health issues is often a complex and challenging one. Mental health conditions affect millions of people worldwide and can manifest in a variety of ways. This paper aims to provide a high-level overview of the journey of a person with mental health may experience, from recognizing the symptoms to seeking treatment and recovery.

Recognizing the Symptoms

The journey of a person with mental health often starts with recognizing the symptoms of a mental health condition. Mental health conditions can manifest in a variety of ways, such as changes in mood, behavior, thoughts, or emotions. These symptoms can range from mild to severe and can interfere with the person's daily life, work, and relationships. One of the key factors in determining the level of care required is how much the condition impacts one's life.

It is important to note that mental health conditions can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status. Common mental health conditions include depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Sometimes the symptoms are what we call co-morbid, meaning that a person may experience more than one condition at any given time. To further complicate matters, there can be multiple types of PTSD, for example. Not all people with PTSD have served in the military. It can stem from abuse, persistent and consistent stress in one's life or from a traumatic experience such as witnessing a violent event. Anxiety is another one that can be complicated. Is it social anxiety, obsessive behaviors, or hoarding behaviors. Depression can manifest itself as sadness and sometimes as anger. That is why this is such a difficult area of medicine to provide accurate and specific diagnosis.

In the last 10 + years brain imaging has advanced and doctors are better positioned to make accurate diagnosis based on self-reported behaviors and brain imaging. Another challenging aspect in getting an accurate diagnosis is that people may not always disclose all their symptoms. They may not recognize that hoarding, for example could stem from a mental health issue. They might even recognize that hoarding is an issue. When trying to diagnose bi-polar is not uncommon for the person seeking help to wait until they hit 'rock bottom' before seeking help which typically means they are in a state of depression. They do not realize that their prior manic behaviors are also part of the issue.

When dealing with youth, it can be incredibly difficult to determine what is actually ‘normal hormonal teen-age behavior’ and what might be a mental health issue that requires medical intervention. To further complicate the matter, sometimes the issue is hormonal and not brain (or chemically) based. This is why seeking medical help is essential in getting an accurate a diagnosis.

Seeking Help

Once a person recognizes the symptoms of a mental health condition, the next step is to seek help. Seeking help can be challenging due to the stigma surrounding mental health, fear of judgment, or lack of access to mental health services for the uninsured.

However, seeking help is crucial for the person's well-being and recovery. There are many options for seeking help, including therapy, medication, support groups, and self-help techniques. It is essential to find a treatment approach that works for the person's unique needs and preferences. It is recommended that you start with the least invasive approach and seek additional help as needed unless one is in a crisis. That crises my include, but not be limited to suicide attempts, violent behavior, and acute psychosis where the person is not in touch with reality. In those instances, and others, seeking immediate medical help is essential.

Treatment and Recovery

The journey of a person with mental health issues often involves a combination of treatment and recovery. Treatment can include therapy, medication, or a combination of both. Therapy can help the person address the underlying issues that contribute to their mental health condition, develop coping skills, and improve their overall well-being.

Medication can help alleviate the symptoms of the mental health condition and improve the person's ability to function.

Most people with complex and/or acute mental health issues may find it challenging to get an accurate diagnosis on the first visit to their doctor. It can take several visits and sometimes several different treatment options before one lands on a workable solution, one where the person can find relief from their symptoms, master coping strategies and live a full life. During this time, it can be challenging to find solutions which provide peace.

Summary

Mental health issues are difficult to identify and manage. Seeking help is key, whether it is a temporary issue due to a death in the family or a significant change in life circumstances. If the issue(s) are impacting your life significantly, it is worth the work to get issues addressed. It is a long journey for some and for others the journey to wellness is short. No matter the difficulty, wellness is worth the work. Stay the course and you will be rewarded with a happy and full life.