NORMALIZATION OF SEEKING HELP FOR MENTAL ILLNESSES

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In the middle of the pandemic, where all the things that are considered normal have been obsolete, a lot of Filipinos struggle financially due to the frozen commerce and economy. There are estimated 10.9 million Filipinos that lost their jobs during the covid-19 pandemic (ABS-CBN New December 2020). With the financial stress and the anxiety towards the spread of the virus, problems with mental health issues have increased exponentially. During the pandemic the project Hopeline a mental health helpline for suicide prevention observed as high as 200% increase in calls by April 2020 (Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services, September 2020).

During such a challenging time it is easy to spiral into the dark crevasse of our minds. Mental health is as real as physical health. Some might be stronger and tougher than others, but we are all going through something. The isolation, loneliness, and uncertainty of the past months have weighed heavy to our mental health. Sadly, many people chose not to seek help, fearing the stigma attached to the concept of mental health, which is why students should be made aware of the importance of mental health awareness and normalization of mental health.

What is mental illness? To simply put it, mental health is a physical illness of the brain. People always think that mental health is all in the brain, in a way that is true, but it’s not something that can easily be cured by cheering up. Studies have proven that the brains of the people who have mental illness respond differently compared to people who do not have mental illness. Their brain chemistry is off and the neurons do not function correctly.
Mental illness is not just “crazy”, mental illnesses are numerous and complex, there are a lot of disorders and conditions that “crazy” is just too vague description. The stereotypical mental illness that many of us are familiarized with is the irrational, havoc wrecking, delusional, and hallucinating, which is the symptoms and indication of someone with schizophrenia. But what people do not know is that mental illness can have so many different faces. In fact, many people with mental illness can look just like you and me, normal and functional.

Depression and Anxiety are some of the mental health issues that can be deceiving. A person with depression can look absolutely fine on the outside, but breaking down within. Depression is not just feeling sad all of the time, that is why some people smiling and acting happy doesn’t mean they do not suffer from depression. In many cases people with severe depression looks totally fine up until the moment they snap, which sadly can go two extremely different ways, a mental breakdown or in many unfortunate cases, suicide. Some symptoms of depression can be losing interest on things that used to bring joy to you, feeling incredibly conflicted on one’s emotions, fatigue, losing or gaining excessive weight, insomnia, feeling worthless and guilt on a daily basis, feeling utterly worthless, having repetitive or continues tough of death or suicide. Anxiety on the other hand is feeling unwarranted panic, fear, and impending doom, having difficulty sleeping, physical symptoms like excessive sweating, palpitation, and in some cases being unable to stay still. Anxiety can also cause over-thinking, inability to concentrate, and being irritable. Meaning, Depression is like being numb, feeling nothing, while anxiety is like feeling way too much. Having both of these, feeling nothing and everything at same time, because there are people who suffer from anxiety and depression. Just think of how confusing it is for them to process their emotions and feelings.

But even anxiety and depression can have many forms, not just what is stated above. This is why is it absolutely important to seek professional help if the symptoms happen to you or someone you know. Seeking professional help means right treatment can be applied.
It doesn’t mean that a person with mental illness is weak or incapable, it’s just that having someone to confine on and understand the situation can make the difference. Seeking professional help for mental illness is not something to be ashamed of. That is the truth that all of us should understand, having professional help for mental illness is just like going to the doctor for common illnesses. Because it is common, more common that many would like to consider.

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