

Focus Group 1

Some themes that seemed to run through all of the personal stories:

Mental illness strikes around age 20, except for TH

When illness strikes, the victims were handicapped in dealing with it for two reasons:

- 1) personal ignorance about mental illness, and possible denial due to stigma
- 2) the disabling effect of the illness

Mental health “professionals” often display shortcomings:

- 1) difficulty in reaching a diagnosis
- 2) reluctance to share the diagnosis or collaborate in other ways with the patient
- 3) tendency to actually reinforce stigma and disrespect the patient

Public education (e.g. NAMI) has been helpful in correcting some of the ignorance and stigma

In spite of the challenges, these individuals have mostly found a way to live with their illness

- 1) finding and adhering to the right medication
- 2) understanding and accepting the demands of their illness
- 3) learning and navigating the various support services that are available