

Time to Move Forward

by: Kevin Hines

The world can certainly be a frightening place. This rings even more true to those of us who have a mental illness...or a brain disease of any kind. Millions of people without the understanding or the empathy for such ailments need to be constantly reminded that the human brain is the single most important and powerful organ in the body. When the brain (for lack of a better term) malfunctions, the rest of the body falters as well. If you have a brain disease, you suffer mentally perhaps with some form of depression, psychosis, or both.

Those in the armed services are not immune to mental illnesses. In fact, during 2012 the Marine Corps rates of suicide and military rates were the highest they had ever been. Commanding officers are working day and night to help reduce the number of suicides amongst the corps! At one point marines were dying from suicides more often than war-related deaths.

Even the Secretary of Defense has moved toward reduction of suicides as a huge platform to make positive change.

If it is so clear that depression and psychosis stems from the brain and is not some made up false condition, then why do generations of individuals and families living in the 2013 era ignore, debate, and deny these absolute truths?

Why are there so many of us living in this decade who don't believe mental illness exists, or acknowledge that it is real? With all of the work to raise awareness and fight for prevention of suicide going on in the here and now, I ask you...where is the disconnect?

How in this day and age can the phrases "Just snap out of it, Get over it, or pull yourself up by your bootstraps" still be acceptable? If anyone you know has ever broken their arm or leg, what is the first thing people do? They grab a sharpie pen or marker and sign the cast (most commonly) "Get well soon!" Yet when one you know is diagnosed with a severe mental illness or brain disease we tend to balk at that severity and many can even be heard saying something to the effect of, "it's all in his or her head."

Let's stop there and think for a minute..."all in their head." Well, that is about the most accurate statement of all the derogatory things people say to those with a diagnosed mental illness since the afflicted organ-- the brain-- is located in the head. And let's not forget that the brain controls every aspect of the body, each and every motor function, every movement, every thought, and everything else we do, think, feel or dream.

The brain is in where you first realize when you have a broken limb, when you get a cut or scratch. It's the same organ that allows you to walk, talk, exercise, or feel a sip of water across your lips. So why is there still denial that mental illness doesn't exist?

My friends, I am here to tell you that they are as real as a heart attack, a stroke, or pancreatic cancer. Society must wake up from their denial because, once we cease to deny its existence, we can focus on the real issue: the fact that mental illness is treatable. This means that it is actually plausible that with treatment you will get better over time.

You can get well. It is within your reach.