

## It is Always a War

Bipolar disorder is a challenge faced by people around the world. The stigma has already ruined too many lives. A great passage from the novel *Ender's Game*, perfectly describes the situation:

There is no teacher but the enemy. No one but the enemy will tell you what the enemy is going to do... Only the enemy shows you where you are weak. Only the enemy tells you where he is strong... From now on the enemy is more clever than you. From now on the enemy is stronger than you. (Card, 206 – 207)

In any campaign of struggle; the words price, popularity, and perception are always lingering. These truths represent the battles that need to be won by 2020 in order to overcome our relentless foe.

Inexpensive ways to combat stigma already exist. We only have to look at social media to save the day. Facebook, Twitter, and myriad others allow for instant information exchange. Any person, group or organization can use these tools to sustain the fight against stigma. The Internet is an educational tool. With the incredible rise in usage of the Web and Cloud enabled devices, it is clear where the most influential theatre of conflict lies. The best part about this strategic asset is that it is practically unlimited and free to use.

Right now the prevailing perceptions are the ones that carry the images of the people that are losing to bipolar disorder. It will be hard to gain traction on our home front – family members, lost friends, and employers. Heroes need to be recognized to rally support. Ted Turner<sup>i</sup>, a billionaire philanthropist is an example of someone driven to succeed. His bipolar disorder did intervene at times, but he still carried on forward. It should be clear as day that persons with bipolar disorder are no less capable in any way than persons who do not. Stigma is powerless unless you allow it to affect you.

Perceptions will be the most difficult to change. However, any children born after the year 1990 hold promise. Cleverer than those that came in the past, they are the key to victory. It starts with education – generation y readily accepts it. Support has to be given to families around the world, so they can afford to send their kids to good schools and so they can participate in extracurricular activities. It is about creating an environment where positive attitudes thrive. For young adolescents, mental health should be added as a component in Health/Fitness classes. Stigma would have been largely eliminated far earlier if these steps had been taken.

The resurgence is already happening. These three convergent tactics will change the game. Modern medicine; and the rise of support groups, allows for an army that can finally corner stigma on all fronts. The future of stigma will be decided by the one great effort that unites us for a cause. This constant never changes. That is why it is called a war.

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