

Mental or Medical?

by Gloria Garfunkel

"We wouldn't mock the recent Tornado victims, right? Why mock the mentally ill?"

Jennifer Donnell, Fictionaut Member.

The mentally ill are close to my heart, having helped the most severely impaired adults and children for the past thirty years including military families of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. I myself suffer miserably with Bipolar Disorder while living a fully functioning life, with its quirks.

In October 2008 Congress Passed the Mental Health Parity Law stating that treatment of mental illness must be treated exactly the same as medical illness. It is a biological disorder and no one's fault. Since then, a bipolar is given the same level of care as a heart attack victim. I myself was poisoned by a bipolar overdose by my doctor leading to brain injury and hospitalization on a medical floor. Mental illness may be manifested by odd behaviors, compulsions, delusions, hallucinations, obsessions, mood instability, hopelessness, depression, suicide, self-mutilation, anxiety, avoidance, mania, but it is all centered in the brain and therefore all mental illnesses are also medical illnesses. Suicide rates have risen 30% in the US in the last ten years, higher now than car accidents, because vulnerable depressed people are under more stress than ever and this effects hormones and brain chemistry. The brain is an organ of the body.

Yet people don't treat mental disorders as biological. The typical person is completely ignorant that it is a medical disorder.

Well it is. And now you know. And just like you wouldn't mock Alzheimer's, or diabetes or cancer, or maybe crack an anti-Semitic joke about a Jew, maybe now you can stop and think before mocking a mental illness, however weird it seems to appear. Because, like a

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medical disorder, the person can't help it and they and their family are suffering greatly.

