



Mental Illness Network News

The Monthly Newsletter of the National Catholic Network on Mental Illness



FEBRUARY 2014



Without Faces: An Art Exhibit on Mental Illness by a NAMI Member in Key West



Homily on Mental Illness by Deacon Lan



Health and Wellbeing in Caregiving: Survey Results of American Psychological Association



Caregiving and Taking Care of Yourself

WITHOUT A FACE: THE EYES OF MENTAL ILLNESS

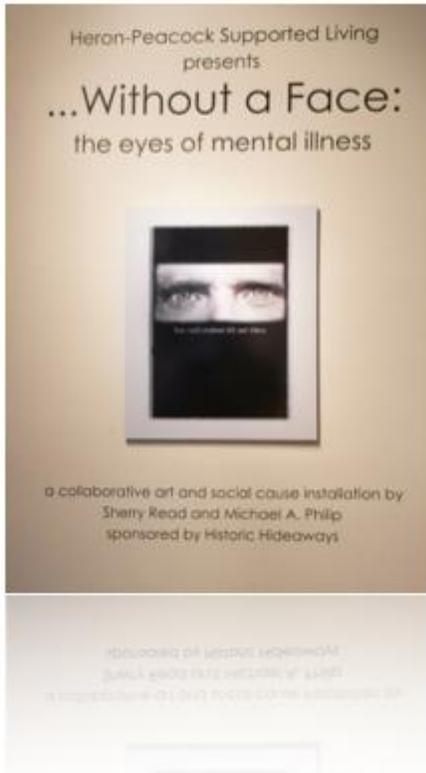
It always amazes me how God works!

My wife and I were in Key West, Florida for some R&R. We have been there before and I have gotten to know the pastor at St Mary's parish, a wonderful enthusiastic priest who makes everyone feel welcome. He asked me, as he has in the past, to preach at all the masses on mental illness. This time he asked me to especially address families. I shared about our experience with our daughter and what a difficult time we had trying to get her the help she needed. After each of the masses there were lines of people wanting to talk to me about their personal experience or a family member's experience with mental illness. This goes to show that even though people don't bring it up there are always people who want to talk about mental illness so people shouldn't be shy to bring it up.

During the week the pastor said there were so many phone calls and so much talk about the issue that he would like us to present a



Lenten mission on the topic. He said one of the callers quoted a line in my homily where I said if a person has cancer you wouldn't just say to them get over it, you would help them get treatment. One of the callers said that motivated them to do something about a loved one's mental illness. It reminded me that you never know how what you might say may impact someone to get the help they need. That is why what we all do in our ministries is so important.



One of the outcomes of the response was that we received a call from one of the sponsors of an art exhibit going on in town and she wanted to show it to us. It is titled "...Without a Face: The Eyes of Mental Illness" by Sherry Read and Michael Philip. It was created and being shown locally and is portable so it will soon be made available for travel to other parts of the country. We met with Sherry Read, who is a NAMI member and "Family to Family" teacher, as well as president of a local supportive living facility. The other, Michael Philip, is a renowned photographer and published author. The exhibit is in two parts. As one person expressed it in a letter to the editor:

"By conveying two sides of mental disorders the show pits the internal experience of the ill person against the public's reaction via its pharmaceutical remedies. The first part of the exhibit features photographs of eyes – just the eyes - of persons with mental illnesses accompanied by still but swift quotes that shout discomfort. The second section is of



six wall-mounted medicine cabinets, their doors ajar, their shelves lined with plastic drugstore pill bottles. When these two parts come together they make a powerful work of art."

One of the more powerful parts of the exhibit was that on successive shelves in the cabinets were medication bottles, then prescription bottles with "other" remedies, then positive things one can do.



For those who are interested I will let you know when the exhibit becomes available. A NAMI Ohio group has already asked for it and I hope to get it to Chicago as well. If you wish you can also contact the project manager for the exhibit, Sherry Read, at sherrykw2@aol.com, or 305-

294-2648.

A brochure on the exhibit can be found here.

Deacon Tom Lambert



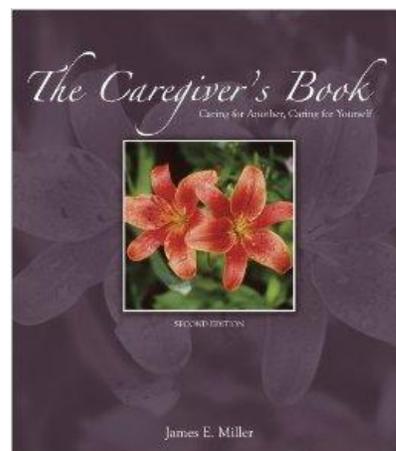
CAREGIVING AND TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF



Are you a primary caregiver for a loved one in your family? Or do you support another family member as best you can, but from a distance? If so here are some notes and tips on caregiving culled from a learning session on that topic at our recent conference, *Partnership 2013: Where Faith and Disability Meet* held in Houston, TX on November, 2013 by NCPD board members Tom Racunas, Director, Ministry with Persons with Disabilities of the Diocese of Wichita, and Anna Marie Cruz of the Diocese of San Bernardino.

The presentation built upon data from the American Psychological Association and structured around eight main points as framed in James Miller's book titled, *The Caregiver's Book*, available from Amazon at the link. Miller has written 20 books on caregiving and related topics and has personally experienced the issues that caregiving brings with his care for his wife and parents.

The central question of the presentation, and this article, is "As a caregiver, are you taking care of yourself?" Some may find this question secondary to the point of providing the care that is needed to their loved one, but the fact is that the wellbeing of the caregiver directly impacts the wellbeing of the one for whom they are caring. If the caregiver is rested, engaged emotionally, is rejuvenated regularly and is healthy in a variety of ways, this health and vitality is conveyed to the person receiving care.



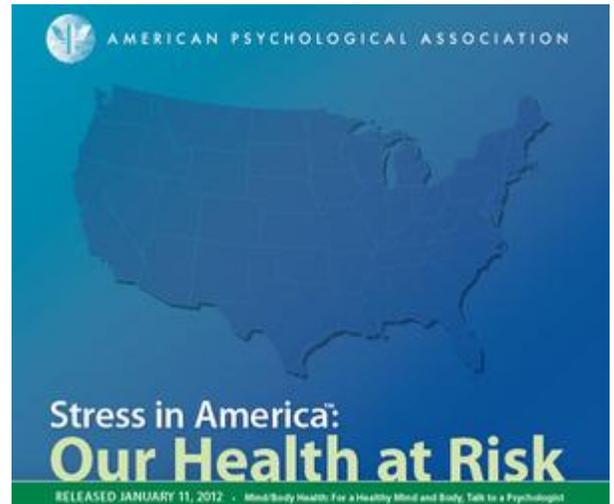
amazon.com



Before looking at some of the eight ways that caregivers can look to maintain their own wellbeing, lets take a brief view of a survey on the question in the January 2012 American Psychological Association report: *Stress in America: Our Health at Risk*

- Caregivers report **higher levels of stress, poorer health** and a **greater tendency to engage in unhealthy behaviors** to alleviate their stress than the general public.
- 55% of caregivers say they are **overwhelmed** by the amount of care their disabled, aging or chronically ill family member requires.
- Caregivers report doing a **poor to fair job of practicing healthy behaviors** and managing stress.

There are millions of caregivers in the U.S. with the number expected to double by 2030!



In Miller’s work he lays out the following eight areas to address the wellbeing of the caregiver and reduce their stress. For this article we will focus on the first two.

1. The only way to support another effectively is to be effectively supported
2. The healthiest way to care for another is to care for yourself
3. By focusing on your feelings you can focus beyond your feelings
4. To be close you must establish boundaries
5. In accepting your helplessness you become a better caregiver
6. Caregiving is more than giving care, it is receiving care
7. As a caregiver your strength is your flexibility
8. In the ordinariness of your caregiving lies something more sacred

1. The only way to support another effectively is to be effectively supported

Caregiver Support Groups

The top recommendation in this area is to be involved in a caregiver support group. Get support and ideas from those who have gone this way before, and who are currently involved in caregiving. Know that you are not alone in what you do and experience. Look for caregiver support groups in your parish, or nearby parishes. If one does not exist, consider starting one.



Some tips for starting a support group can be found at the button.



The diocese of Rockville Centre is also planning a two-day workshop in March, 2014 on *How to Begin a Caregivers Support Group*. More information can be found here.

2. The healthiest way to care for another is to care for yourself

List things you can do for yourself

A healthy caregiver is about tapping into your own resources and the things that energize you so that you can more fully give to the person for whom you are providing care. Brainstorm a list on all the things that you can do to re-energize yourself then seek to get the support that you need in order to do some of them. A good example of a support provider is the Volunteer Chore Services, Catholic Community Services, Seattle, Washington, see more here.



But more than re-energizing, a caregiver needs to look after his or her self in the most basic ways: sleep, a healthy diet, exercise, social contact, keeping up with your own medication if you have some, time for prayer. The four legs that support persons with mental illness count for caregivers as well: Biological, Spiritual, Social and Psychological. A healthy and vibrant caregiver is more prepared to care for their loved ones.

Caregiver U

An interesting example of a comprehensive caregiver wellness program is Caregiver U. which is a collaboration of 20 Central Texas non-profit agencies and community organizations, joining together to bring support and resources to families that are caring for an older loved one.

From its website it reads, “*Powerful Tools for Caregivers* is a series of classes designed to empower family caregivers of older adults to take better care of themselves. The “tools” learned in the six-week series benefit caregivers by helping them reduce stress, improve caregiving confidence, establish balance in their lives, communicate their needs, make tough decisions and locate helpful resources. The evidence-based curriculum was developed by Dr. Kate Lorig and her colleagues at Stanford University. [Learn more at their website.](#)

Classes are led by certified class leaders. Topics include:

- Taking Care of You
- Identifying and Reducing Personal Stress
- Communicating Feelings, Needs and Concerns
- Learning from Emotions
- Communicating in Challenging Situations
- Mastering Caregiving Decisions



More information on Caregiver U. can be found at their website.

Links to Mental Health Organizations



www.ncpd.org



www.mentalhealthministries.net



www.miministry.org



www.nami.org



www.pathways2promise.org

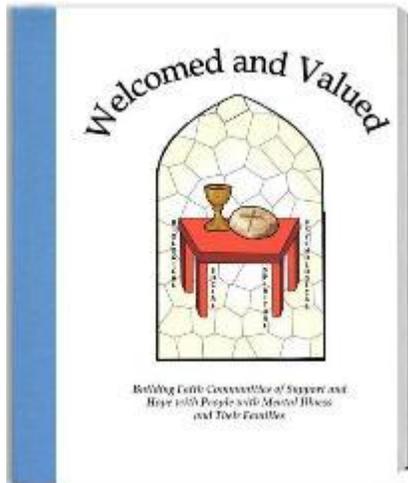
FROM THE EDITOR

We invite you to tell us about your ministry. What are you doing, what are your hopes, and what are your struggles? One of our goals is to network ideas and ministries so that we can all share in the day-to-day life of people trying to make a difference by being Christ to one another.



Please send all emails to me, Deacon Tom Lambert, at olmcinfo2@aol.com and put NCPD Council on MI Network in the subject line. You can also call me at 773-525-0453 if you have any questions or ideas, or for more information on workshops, DVDs, speakers, and our [Resource Binder](#).

Welcomed and Valued: Mental Illness Resource Manual and DVD *Now Also Available in Spanish*



The Resource Manual features 90+ pages of information, perspectives and tools to assist in the ministry with people with mental illness.

The DVD features in depth looks at people with mental illness and how they participate in parish life. (27-minute open captioned DVD)
Discussion guide included.

[Click here](#) for a free download of the Resource Manual.

[Click here](#) for purchase options (scroll to lower portion of webpage).

Please consider making a donation to support the mission of the Council on Mental Illness. Your help allows this effort to continue.

[Donate
to NCPD](#)

Our Mission:

Following Jesus who embraced all, we assist the Catholic Community in reaching out to and accompanying our brothers and sisters with mental illness and their families, assuring their rightful place in the Church and society.

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The logo depicts the Eucharistic table to which all are called.

It also presents four dimensions to personal wholeness, each important to healing and recovery: spiritual, biological, psychological, and social.

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