

PMH JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

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I am looking forward to learning about psychiatric illnesses. It's interesting how differently the brain functions in every person. I want to get a better understanding of what is going on inside the brain of someone who is suffering, and how I can help assist with making them feel at ease.

I believe that my experience with someone who suffers from psychiatric illnesses made me even more intrigued in this area. I was in a relationship for about 7 years with someone who suffered from depression and anxiety. We were together throughout high school, but I never really saw "signs" of depression when I was around him until after we graduated. His relationship with his mother progressively got worse, and he thinks that's what mainly triggered his depression. He had always been anxious when it came to being around a large group of people, meeting new people, or even going to the store. After about a year, his depression and anxiety had hit a bad point and being someone who, fortunately, didn't understand what it was like to have those feelings, I would get frustrated with him. Now looking back, I wish I wouldn't have gotten frustrated with him. I wish I would've initially asked how I could help, or if I could help at all.

One day he told me, "I would never wish this darkness upon you, but I wish you could understand what this feels like, so you know that I truly am hurting." From that day forward, I told myself to try to understand what he was feeling instead of making him feel worse. I frequently asked him to explain to me the best that he could, what he was experiencing. There were days when he would explain in detail, but then there were other days when he really didn't want to talk about it. I eventually understood his anxiety more, and was willing to adapt so I never made him feel uncomfortable, because that's the last thing I wanted to do. As for his depression, I couldn't understand how someone could feel so down. Not in a bad way, but my brain could not comprehend those feelings. All I wanted to do was help him become happier, but it just wasn't that easy. I suggested that he go seek professional help if he's comfortable with it,

and he did. I believe they prescribed him Xanax for his anxiety, but unfortunately, he started abusing the medication. Eventually, it got to the point where he wanted to take his own life. I had no idea what to do, especially because I was his only support system. He went through the lowest point in his life trying to fight the battle of addiction on top of dealing with his other illnesses. Since then, he has stopped taking any medication because he knows that the possibility of becoming addicted is high, but he's back to not being able to manage his depression and anxiety. I'm proud of him for overcoming that obstacle, but he seemed happier when he was taking medication, even if it wasn't true happiness.

I guess my fear or concern is that I will be "triggered" in an emotional way. When I think about how he – or anybody that is experiencing an illness – feels having to deal with that every single day, I can't help but cry. It makes me so emotional because I've seen depression and anxiety completely change someone I love; into someone I didn't even recognize. Obviously, there's science behind it and people can be prescribed medication to hopefully feel better, but I don't understand why psychiatric illnesses aren't easier to treat or manage. I'm not trying to make this about me by any means, but I genuinely cannot wrap my head around what they are feeling; that doesn't stop me from trying to learn. I want to save any person from having to suffer, especially every day, and it hurts to know that it is practically impossible. I want to learn the best and most effective way to care for these people, and I want them to have a more positive outcome when it comes to life. Nobody deserves to suffer.

The questions I have are: What are other ways for someone who suffers from depression/anxiety to cope with it and manage it? Most of the time, these people don't have enough energy to get out of bed, so what can I do to help them find the motivation? How do I approach someone who is suffering? What kind of questions should I ask? What questions shouldn't I ask?