Topic: Current Theories and Practice

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According to the CDC, mental health affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle every situation in our lives and make healthy choices (CDC, 2024). This is a good definition, and I couldn't define it better myself. Talking about mental health is hard, but it interests me because my family has a history of mental illness.

As a child growing up in the Philippines, where mental health problems are not widely recognized as legitimate health issues, life was difficult. People with mental health problems are often left alone and not treated properly and rarely diagnosed. Some become homeless, others are incarcerated and there are extreme cases of those with mental illness who are left in the care of abusers. At a young age, I feared and avoided anyone who I perceived with evident and extreme symptoms of mental health issues because I was afraid that they could harm or hurt me. I witnessed irrational reactions and responses before, and it left me with a sense of uncertainty. I wasn't sure why some people I met were not emotionally or psychologically stable while others seemed to have an abundance of those qualities. Only later when my brother began to have serious mental health issues did I begin to learn and understand a little more on the subject.

My parents' first approach was to take my brother Benji to a faith healer, but it did not work. It was a struggle for us during those times as my brother's behavior changed. He became violent and started having strange visions and imaginary friends. It took a while for my parents to take him to a doctor due to financial problems. It was a long battle, but with the help of the doctor and proper medication, my brother eventually recovered. It was not easy because his mental illness would come and go for at least four years until he was finally healed.

My parents never shared all the information from the doctor about what might have caused or triggered the illness. To this day, I don't fully understand why it happened, but some local villagers rumored he was possessed by a bad spirit or that he starved himself for a long time, which made him hallucinate. I have always been open to learning about it so I began watching videos online and researching Benji's symptoms which sent me into a rabbit hole of information. So much of it that I don't believe I. or anyone for that matter, will truly understand any one persons' mental health problem to its core unless maybe it is a self-evaluation.

With my many concerns and fears (concerns for my family and fears that it might happen again), I want to know how to prevent these illnesses from happening and learn some ways to cure it.

The opportunity to be a student is a big deal for me. I have high expectations for myself. I expect to learn all that I can about mental illness. I hope that one day I can advocate for people who need mental health support and even someday educate others. Some questions I would like to find answers to are: What triggers mental illness? Can it be cured, or will it come back? Is it genetic? I can't wait to learn more about this topic soon.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, April 16). *About mental health*. Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm