

**Current Theories and Practice**

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As someone who has personally experienced mental health challenges and witnessed them in my family, mental health is a topic I am deeply passionate about. Unfortunately, mental health is often overlooked and neglected for various reasons, yet it is crucial that we address it in order to provide effective care for our patients.

My mother was diagnosed with severe depression, OCD, compulsive anxiety, and panic disorder. My father, who is currently incarcerated, has never been formally diagnosed with a psychiatric illness to my knowledge. However, his behaviors, including a tendency towards anger and substance use as a way to avoid confronting his thoughts and feelings, lead me to believe that he, too, suffers from an undiagnosed mental illness. Instead of receiving the treatment he needed, he was thrust into the prison system, where he was left to his own devices, surrounded by others suffering from similar neglect. This cycle of untreated mental illness and incarceration often leads to repeated patterns of destructive behavior upon release.

My parents were born in the late 1970s and raised in the 80s, a time when mental illness was still a taboo subject. They were raised by parents who themselves likely experienced mental health issues but lived in an era where seeking psychiatric help was even less common. My father's mental illness prevented us from building a true father-daughter bond. His unresolved trauma from growing up in a dangerous neighborhood in East St. Louis, Illinois, with an absent father, made him prone to violence. Although I was never directly harmed, my mother bore the brunt of his anger, leading to his incarceration for the first seven years of my life. My mother, afflicted with her own trauma from neglect in her childhood too, was left to pick up the pieces as I grew up.

My parents were not the only ones in my family with a mental illness, my uncle, who lived with us for a time, was diagnosed with manic bipolar schizophrenia. He also abused substances and I witnessed the effects of what that did to him and our family. I remember going with my grandparents to drop him off every Friday at his narcotics anonymous meetings and meeting his different sponsors he acquired through the program. As it may be inferred, I myself, whether it be genetics or a result of the environment I was in of family members suffering from these silent, mental diseases, developed my own. I was diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and depression. I, however, put myself in therapy and have been for two and a half years now. I do not have any fears or concerns or anything that may trigger me, I believe being in therapy as I have been, I am able to identify those triggers and compartmentalize them in a healthy way to where it does not affect me.

My passion for mental health stems from understanding, firsthand, the generational impact of untreated mental illness. I expect to become more educated on a different level than I am now and be able to provide better care to my patients because I know what it is like. Some questions I hope are answered during this course are the link between mental illnesses and the structural effects on the brain, the physiology of psychiatric medications and their ability to bridge the gap or create one in illnesses, and how we are able to tackle the growing epidemic. I look forward to this module and the insights it will bring on a subject that is deeply personal to me.