

This week I experienced my first group therapy session with Ms. Nancy Stiefel. I was late to our first session because last week I had a family emergency, which I informed Nancy and the group members of once I joined the session.

During our first session, we discussed what our families think of our decision to pursue jobs in the field. I shared with the group that while my mom is supportive of my career choice, my father and brother look down on it and have been vocal about their preferences for me to be a nurse or accountant. My group members shared similar sentiments about their families either being indifferent about their career choice or actively expressing their disdain and disapproval.

We also discussed the role of mental health in our culture. All of the members of my group descended from immigrants and we all shared that our cultures view mental illness in a stigmatized way. I shared my experience with bipolar disorder and explained that my father told me I have no reason to be "behaving irrationally" because I have a roof over my head, all of my limbs and that I have a lot to be thankful for. My need to discuss my decline in mental health was seen as me being attention seeking and focusing on being ungrateful.

I cried during my first session of group therapy because when we talked about family, I thought of how broken we are and how my brother is currently going through mental health issues following his wedding and my mom and I decided to keep that information from my father. In discussing our different family dynamics, I got emotional because of the way my parents set a precedent in my house as kids that we were not to talk about or express strong emotions, and in a way, I feel my brother and I are paying for that now that we both suffer from mental illness.

I found our first group extremely helpful, as I was having an extremely stressful day and had to book a flight for my mother to go to Boston to be with my brother and his new wife in their time of distress.