

Bright Tomorrows

*Reflecting the Compassion of Jesus Christ
to Those with Mental Health Concerns*

“i am ENOUGH!”

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

My name is Mary Jane, and I have schizoaffective disorder, bipolar type. Schizoaffective disorder is a mental disorder in which a person experiences a combination of schizophrenia symptoms and mood disorder symptoms. With the bipolar type, I experience episodes of mania and major depression. While I do have periods when I feel good, the episodes of depression are very painful and there are times when I am plagued with thoughts of suicide. Some years ago I began attending a curriculum based Bright Tomorrows Support Group. I have learned that there is a great feeling of solidarity in knowing that, while each group participant may not be experiencing exactly what I am, they have similar situations that they work through, and we can help each other grow and learn how to overcome problems.

I was born in 1987—almost on St. Patrick's Day. I am one of three sisters. I have good childhood memories but also distressing ones. I grew up with asthma and allergies so challenging that it resulted in lots of hospitalizations and the need for steroid shots which caused weight gain. I also vividly recall the deeply disturbing consequences that resulted from a girl cousin inappropriately touching me while

we would be with my grandma. She was a spoiled girl and basically allowed to have anything she wanted. Subsequently, I didn't feel that I could go to my grandma. However, eventually as a result of telling my sister it got out and caused a family split leading to no visits. I felt that this was my fault. I blamed myself. I was angry with myself for telling my sister about the event. My self-esteem plummeted. I have since chosen to forgive my cousin and the family is healing.

I suffered a lot of bullying from classmates. They thrived on making me cry. There was a boy named James who wanted everyone to feel like they belonged. He stood up for me! It was a great shock to me when he was diagnosed with Leukemia. I remember going on our 8th grade graduation trip anticipating going on to high school with him but it turned out that James could not. He did get better for a while and hoped to start up 2nd semester. Unhappily, due to a seriously compromised immune system, James got a fungal infection in his brain. In addition to his family, many student friends went to the hospital to say their goodbyes. I was given an opportunity to privately say goodbye to my friend. He went peacefully.

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Bright Tomorrows is dedicated to reflecting the compassion of Jesus Christ by promoting mental health, helping those struggling with mental illness toward a healing-recovery lifestyle, and by assisting churches in their mission to better serve those with mental health concerns.



JEREMIAH 29:11

"For I know the plans
I have for you,
declares the LORD,
"plans for wholeness
and not for evil,
plans to give you
hope and a future."



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Mission Update Report

BT offers two curriculum-based support groups from September-May. The faith-based and hope-affirming Christian materials used are clinically accurate. The **Bright Tomorrows Support Group (BTSG)**, meeting on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays at 7PM, is designed for adults with a bipolar disorder or a depression diagnosis. The **Bright Tomorrows Family Group (BTFG)**, meeting the 2nd & 4th Thursdays at 7PM, is a support group designed for the family and friend support givers of those with mental health concerns. (See our website for details.)

SPRING SEMINARS: Tim Reside, Bright Tomorrows President, offered to support group participants and the general public three educational seminars: **Understanding the Risk of Suicide and How to Recognize the Signs, Intervene and Prevent; The ABC's of Coping & Resilience** (co-presented with Amanda Bradley, MS, LPC, Program Director – COPES); and **The Ins and Outs of Fashioning a Mutually Supportive Wellness Team.**

BT continues to offer to pastors, ministers, lay leaders and chaplains, **FREE Bi-Monthly Breakfast Seminars** led by qualified presenters discussing topics pertinent to church ministry.

BT's January Breakfast Seminar **Review and Discussion: Applications for Pastors from "Grace for the Afflicted"** was a discussion of what we learned from Dr. Matthew Stanford's presentation last fall and how we can apply these things in 2017. The discussion, hosted and moderated by Tim Peterson, LPC, LMFT, looked at the use of the quick screening tool Stanford introduced for assessing levels of emotional distress and possible interventions. We also looked at the significance of how a person's view of God impacts mental health and recovery outcomes.

BT's March Breakfast Seminar **Insights Into Anger** was conducted by Bowden McElroy, M.Ed., LPC. He has been in the counseling field since 1983. McElroy discussed the obvious, that everyone gets angry from time to time, but it isn't always expressed in an appropriate or effective way. His thesis was that anger can serve a useful purpose, but every now and then the level of anger expressed is out of proportion to the situation. He offered insights to ministry leaders for better managing their own emotional state as well as for helping diffuse the anger of others. McElroy's use of humor enhanced his presentation.

BT participated in the March 10th **HEART FOR MENTAL HEALTH** conference sponsored by Denise Roddy, OD, and women of St. James United Methodist Church. This was a non-denominational event designed to raise awareness and inspire hope through information, education, the sharing of mental health/illness journey stories as well as ministry and mental health services organization resources. Tim Reside shared his personal story and Bright Tomorrows resources.

~ Mission Update Report Continued ~

BT participated in the April 25-26 **FAITH AND MENTAL HEALTH: Responding to a Mental Health Crisis** interfaith event sponsored by Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry and Mental Health Association Oklahoma, and hosted by East Side Christian Church. On Day 1, Tim Reside shared **A Pastor's Personal Journey w/ Mental Illness**. On Day 2, an eight hour intensive Mental Health First Aid training was offered.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: Since 1949 Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States reaching millions of people through the media, local events, and screenings. BT invites YOU to join us in spreading the word that mental health is something everyone should care about. You might consider wearing the symbolic color of lime green either as a wrist band, ribbon or in some other way.



Educating Church Leaders



Educating the Public



Tim Tells His Story



Support Groups



Mental Health Consulting & Coaching

Opportunities of Support



Tim & Nancy Reside
Work and Ministry Support

Please indicate on check whether you are making
a monthly pledge OR **a one-time donation**.

Make checks payable to Bright Tomorrows.

Donations are tax-deductible.

To make one-time credit card donations or recurring monthly donations by way of a PayPal account, please visit www.brighttomorrows.org and click the "donate" button on the left side of the web page.



"I Am Enough!" - Continued from front page

I remember a time when my Uncle Mel's business was not doing well and he became very depressed. Due to the stigmatizing suggestion that to admit depression was a sign of weakness, he did not receive proper treatment and in July of 2009 he took his life. This devastated everyone who knew him and temporarily wrecked his wife and kids. Seeing how much pain his actions brought to others, I made a promise to myself that I would never take my life and cause others (especially my mom) to feel that kind of pain.

I have struggled for years with feelings of failure. I've been fired from jobs. I worked hard to get my Bachelor's in Education but had to quit teaching after one year. That all seems like such a waste. I have spent three holidays in a psychiatric hospital. I often feel that I am contributing nothing. I feel that I am taking unfair advantage of my parents who I am living with and who completely support me. Nevertheless, I do have goals and I do want to be employed.

There are some good decisions that I have made that have helped me to keep going rather than totally giving up. In my church I joined the hand bell choir sixteen years ago while in sixth grade. Church was important to me and still is. I felt like I finally

belonged. God and Christian music was all I was hanging on to at one point. Hand bell choir is one thing I kept trying and eventually got really good at. I am proud of that! I can say that I never gave up. In addition to the decision I made regarding refusing to end my life for the sake of my mother and others—I now have a niece. She is one of the great reasons why I regularly seek help. I want to be there for her.

While I have often felt unworthy of God's love, the Christian aspect of Bright Tomorrows has helped me realize even more that God does love me, that He will not leave me in despair and that He will make beauty from the ashes so I can become who He envisioned me to be. I am choosing to realize that I am enough and that success is not only ahead of me but it is already happening.

EDITORS NOTE: This is an adaptation of a story personally told to Tim and Nancy Reside by a Bright Tomorrows Support Group participant. This presentation is the result of notes provided by that participant, Tim and Nancy's recollections and the final approval of the participant stating that this rendering represents the substance of their testimony. Names have been altered for confidentiality purposes.

Contact Information & Resources

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CHURCH MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

NAMI FaithNet: www.nami.org/namifaithnet

Pathways to Promise: www.pathways2promise.org

Mental Health Ministries: www.mentalhealthministries.net

Intl. Bipolar Foundation: www.internationalbipolarfoundation.org

Mental Health Grace Alliance: www.mentalhealthgracealliance.org

Bright Tomorrows Support Group (BTSG) *(Adult Bipolar & Depression Support Group)*

1st & 3rd Thursdays at 7 P.M.

Bright Tomorrows Family Group (BTFG) *(Family & Friend Support Givers Group)*

2nd & 4th Thursdays at 7 P.M.

These 7:00 P.M. Thursday Evening Christian Support Group Meetings take place September thru May at Asbury United Methodist Church, 6767 South Mingo in Tulsa, OK. For meeting descriptions, a detailed map and complete driving directions, please visit our website.

To receive this free newsletter please e-mail us or visit our website. if you prefer postal delivery, please provide us with your mailing address.

