

Bright Tomorrows

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

Growing Up With A Parent Experiencing Bipolar Disorder

by Michelle Dickinson-Moravek

When you love someone with bipolar disorder, life can be very unpredictable. In my case, it was my mother. She was often so depressed that she couldn't get out of bed and would cry uncontrollably for hours. Other times she'd have what I now know were manic periods. She would crank up the music and start singing and dancing—then, suddenly, she'd be running around the house naked. I referred to these ups and downs as “the roller coaster.”

Mother could also be abusive, slapping me and my brother and sister, telling us that we were garbage and imposing all kinds of arbitrary rules. When I was in school, instead of paying attention to my teachers, I'd spend all day worrying about how my mom was doing—plus, I was weighed down with keeping the secret that I had a “crazy” mother. It was not until I was in high school that I understood my mother had a mental illness. Still, it was tough for me to be sympathetic. Instead, I felt angry.

At 23, I got married early to a male version of my mother. He didn't have bipolar disorder, but he was routinely depressed and abusive, and I found myself constantly trying to fix him—just like I'd try to fix my mother. It wasn't until my mid-20s, when I divorced and started going to therapy, that

I began to heal and learned that it was OK to put some distance between me and my mother, even though I loved her. One day at work, I got a call from my father that my mother had died suddenly of a heart attack. It was only when she was gone, following a lot of self-exploration, that I was able to start having real compassion for what life with a mental illness must have been like for her. I put myself through college and graduate school. Over that time, I realized that I could—and should—tell my story.

In 2013, I submitted a proposal to an internal program that encourages employees to speak on various topics of their choice in a TED Talk-style format. I let myself get raw and vulnerable up on stage, and afterward, colleagues came up to me and said, “Wow—you really exposed yourself.” ... The feedback I got was so positive that I thought: If I can do this, I can write a book. I spent four years working on my memoir, “Breaking Into My Life: Growing Up With a Bipolar Parent and My Battle to Reclaim Myself”, which was published in February 2018.

There's been too much silence around this issue, too much hush-hush, too much stigma. I want to cause conversations to happen. The more we talk about it, the more people will get the help they need for loved ones or themselves. I want to tell the world about my experience—the fact that my little story can change someone's perspective on mental illness, well, that's huge.

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NOTE: The entire article can be read at: [https://www.nami.org/Personal-Stories/Growing-Up-with-a-Parent-Experiencing-Bipolar-Diso](https://www.nami.org/Personal-Stories/Growing-Up-with-a-Parent-Experiencing-Bipolar-Disorder)

MISSION STATEMENT

Bright Tomorrows is committed to mobilizing churches to better serve those with mental health concerns. Our daily mission is to reflect the compassion of Jesus Christ by assisting those struggling with mental illness and promoting mental health.

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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Grateful Notes

Tim and Nancy, we pray that the two of you are well and that your ministry of love and encouragement is thriving. You're both shining examples of God's finest workmanship. We love you dearly!
—Friends of Bright Tomorrows

Tim, I really enjoyed your Bright Tomorrows Annual Caring for your Congregation's Mental Health seminar. It was extremely helpful. The presenter was a phenomenal speaker. Thank you for bringing him here and for making him available for us.
—A Local Senior Pastor

Tim and Nancy, thanks for your recovery story—how your family has coped with a mental health issue of consequence. Not many couples survive that kind of grief storm and turn it into a ministry! We love you two.

—Oklahoma
Representative for
National Family Caregiving
Association/CAN

Hi Tim and Nancy. I wanted you to know I am doing better since last week's support group meeting. I have been experiencing high anxiety recently which had caused quite a bit of irrationality. The discussion about "activating events" and ways they trigger helped me.

—Support Group
Participant

MISSION UPDATE REPORT

MAY IS “MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH”



27% of church congregants are living with mental health challenges. **Bright Tomorrows** is aware that ministry leaders tend to be the “first-responders” to individuals and families in crisis. 65% of family members who have a loved one dealing with a mental health challenge and 59% of those with mental illness want their church to talk openly about mental illness. **Bright Tomorrows** is available to help. For more information, check out our website.

BT continues to offer **FREE:**
(1) **Bi-Monthly Ministry Leaders Breakfast Semi-**

nars; (2) **Support Groups;** and (3) **Coaching and Consultation Services.** See our website for details.

BT's January Ministry Leaders Breakfast Seminar, **A New Model for Transforming Marriages**, was presented by **Charlene and Rod Giles**. With nearly 30 years' experience in developing and overseeing volunteer-led marriage ministries within the local church, they shared with ministry leaders ideas for growing and strengthening their congregations through building strong marriages. In addition, a delicious breakfast was served along with a generous helping of ministry peer fellowship.

BT's March Ministry Leaders Breakfast Seminar, **Understanding Chronic Pain**, was presented by Psychologist, **Dr. Melissa Leedy, PhD**. Chronic pain affects 100 million people in the U.S. 40-50% of people within mental health settings have a chronic pain condition. Psychologist, Dr. Leedy, specializes in the treatment of chronic pain. Seminar participants went away with an understanding of how acute pain differs from chronic pain, how our brains can mediate the experience of pain, and how ministers can be more helpful to those who are suffering. A special screening tool was given to

each attendee for practical use in pastoral and ministry settings.

BT's June Ministry Leaders Breakfast Seminar, **The Art of Being a Healing Presence**, will be presented by Bright Tomorrows President, **Tim Reside, MA, MHC**. For an invitation to this **FREE EVENT**, go to our website **CONTACT US** page, and send us an email request.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT



Tim & Nancy Reside

BT is supported only by good-will donations.

Would you prayerfully consider supporting our ministry as we assist those with mental health challenges?

To make donations online please visit...

www.brighttomorrows.org

All donations are tax-deductible.



THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SUFFER

by Tim Reside, MA, MHC

It is possible, over time, to learn how to suffer the trials, testings and tribulations of life in ways that transform a cause for bitterness and resentment into a pause for gratitude and thanksgiving.

A good dictionary will point out at least three ways to think about how to “suffer” incurable or non-fixable afflictions: (1) To suffer is to feel pain or distress or to sustain injury or harm. It is something happening to you; (2) To suffer can be a choice to tolerate dis-ease as one’s life-defining identity; and (3) To suffer can also mean to allow or make space for. This form of suffering recognizes that what is, is. However, equally it recognizes that choices and attitude can affect one’s quality of life and soul-wellness. This perspective takes the driver’s seat in order to hit the road of life in daily pursuit of meaning and significance rather than surrendering to a

victimization mentality. These persons increasingly learn to celebrate affliction and challenge as life-informing, life-deepening and life-dimensioning. This is transformational suffering.

Susan Gregg-Schroeder, founder of Mental Health Ministries, writes: “Part of my journey has been to understand my bleakest times as times of fertile darkness. When a person begins to live into their darkness, embrace it, and even befriend it, God’s presence is most often revealed.”

BIBLE OBJECT LESSON: Ezekiel, the ancient Jewish prophet, was commanded to eat a scroll consisting of “lamentation, wailing, and moaning.” The Bible says that, as he ate, it eventually became to him “sweet as honey” (see Ezekiel 2:9-10; 3:1-3).

CONNECT WITH US

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www.brighttomorrows.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 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.

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