

Aldrick Monteiro Is There Anyone Out There (Part 1) 16 March 1982

Dear friends, my story is unusual but it is logical. Coming from a certified schizophrenic this may sound a bit odd. Let me say that at present I am 27 years of age, was born in Pakistan, came to England in 1960 and at the prime of my life (seventeen) was cut short with schizophrenia. Yes, everything came to a standstill including my sanity. In effect my whole life was put under a microscope, and had I my sense I would have to think on completely different lines, as to how I was going to cope with the future as indeed I did have to eventually.

Had I not landed in hospital, a brilliant academic and sporting career was opening for me. As it turned out this was not to be. This illness was completely new to me and the family, my parents, brothers and sisters. Having my dear and near ones around me, one would of thought that this would have helped me, but I can honestly say that I was on my own although I am in no way proud of this fact. My reasoning, judgement and coordination were not there, even though it took me 4 years to realize that I was in any way mentally ill. How I came to find out was one evening in September 1976. I just put my record player off, sat down on the bed and said to myself that the sound of the music bellowing forth from my speakers was abnormally loud, and then a thought flashed across my mind from the Mother of God telling me to take my tablets on a regular basis. I did, and from that day onwards I have never looked back.

I regained interest in myself, in people and I am now leading an independent life. I have held a job for nearly six years, and at present I am thinking seriously of going to college on a full-time basis, and then hopefully to university to finish what I left off ten years ago. I draw and paint quite commendably. I enjoy listening to both popular and classical music (Beethoven is my favourite musician). I read books which most people regard as too heavy (D.H. Lawrence is my favourite author). I am a very gregarious person enjoying people's company, and many of my friends conclude that I am a very agreeable person except when I have reason not to be.

I don't drink alcohol because I am on drugs now and for the rest of my life, but happily I am not a liquor lover which I suppose is just as well. I smoke because I find it is a psychological necessity which I would give up tomorrow if I could. My love life is very good, although my sex drive is somewhat limited due to my illness, but I am told this will come back to me in time. In all life is looking good for me, and I can honestly say I have been given a new lease of life in this respect.

So what message and advice have I got for my fellow schizophrenics, who are going and who have yet to go through this living hell doctors term schizophrenia? Well let me first of all say this:

Basically, because the reasoning is not there nobody is to be trusted. This is one of the results of the illness. There is nobody a schizophrenic can turn to, to confide in his/her problems. The medical profession and even the families are viewed with suspicion and mistrust, but with all these complications the drugs must be administered forcibly if necessary, so that sanity may be obtained. But even if this is done it is only temporary. Even though the patient may be well enough to think clearly at the time for himself, he may still not think it necessary to continue the treatment even though it is vital and on a long term basis. It is a vicious circle. Communication, therefore between doctor and patient, family and patient is absolutely vital because once a schizophrenic can be convinced that he is in need of the treatment, half the battle as far as recovery is concerned will be won. The other half will require him to continue the treatment on a regular basis.

Also, I would like to add that the ignorance of the general public to these and related illnesses is quite appalling but quite understandable. When I was admitted into the psychiatric ward as an inpatient for the first time in June 1972, I had visions of pyjama-clad patients running round the ward and hospital grounds with raised hatchets in their hands, and so real was this belief that I fled in terror from the hospital, until I was brought back and came to slowly accept the position my illness and society had placed me in.

It was like a holiday camp. Yes, there are severe cases and the appropriate treatment is given whether the patients are locked away or not. But in most cases it is a place to rest, away from the stress and pressures of life, where tablets are administered to help you on the way to recovery and to a full life as before. It takes time, in some cases more time than others, but people should realize that psychiatric patients are just recuperating like one would recuperate from the common cold or flu. What is required is a little more understanding and patience, and hopefully organizations like the National Schizophrenia Fellowship will promote this.

Lastly, and this has to be said, Catholicism or more to the point Holy Mass and Communion. Now first of all let me say that I am not after converts. All I want to state is that through my darkest moments especially in the initial stages of my illness, I had lost my reason and interest in life but never for one moment took my spiritual eyes of Jesus Christ. I remember very well the events before and after my stay in hospital, the problems I caused for my family, the care and concern shown to me by the same and my own inner troubles. My illness did not affect my memory, but the fact that I attend Mass regularly (I never miss more than two days without going to church), has become a vital part of my "treatment" in my recovery.

You see, dear friends, the Communion I receive and the Mass I hear brings all the cells of my body into a united whole in a very real way and then my reasoning, judgement and coordination are very good. When the effect wears off (after two days) I renew it by attending Mass again and receiving Communion. But it has to be stressed at this point that the drugs have to be taken as well. Why God doesn't cure me outright I have not fathomed completely as yet, but He has told me that "prevention is better than a cure" which to this day I have not bothered to interpret.

I know this however, I am reaping the benefits of following His instructions. I could sit and write all night about the virtues of being a Roman Catholic, but I won't. What I have done is tell my story true in every sense of the word, about how I overcame my insanity problems because of two reasons; firstly my Faith, and secondly my drugs in that order. Dear friends, they say actions speak louder than words. If you have eyes, look. And if you have ears, listen. What you do then is entirely up to you. God bless.

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