



The Fight For Insight: A Look Into One Human's Every Day Mental Health Challenges (An Educational Booklet)

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(Rough Draft)

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A Note From The Author

This booklet is intended to provide general knowledge, and is not intended to serve as medical advice of any sort. Changes in mental health treatment should never be made without consulting your health care provider.

—Mio Angelo

An Overview

Restful Sleep is so “very” important for minimizing the severity of “many” of the mental health symptoms of schizoaffective disorder.

Sleep, in itself, does not guarantee an absence of symptoms—nothing does, but the medication (as much as possible) makes everything “manageable.”

On a day where I have slept “well,” I can expect a few hours of “productivity,” before I get inundated with tiredness!

I find it so odd, that having a good night’s sleep (which can be difficult to attain and maintain) doesn’t equate to not needing, one or more naps “most days.”

I wish I could tell you, too that I am not delusional, anxious or depressed in any way (but, I think you already know that that is not the situation)!

It is quite frustrating, and both my medication and illness are to blame!

A previously “content” and all-around “healthy” individual, schizoaffective disorder has taken me down to a level, that I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy.

The meds do not “fix,” rather they stabilize and subdue, while preventing (with low-stress environments) further psychotic breaks.

I am grateful for the meds, which do come at a cost—and, it’s a cost that I am willing to pay!

Taking the medication is very important for any stability and functionality that I ultimately achieve!

So, what do I do to cope with my symptoms?

Listening to music is my main go-to!

Each and every day (throughout my day), I will listen to music.

When my wife is home and wants to watch TV, I will usually oblige... but, if I never actually watched another program again, I would be fine.

Why?

It is too stimulating for me usually, but also, I watched so much TV growing up, that I really don't care to indulge anymore.

As a note: This is just me. Not everyone with a psychotic illness feels this way.

Do the symptoms I've described so far, ever get better?

In the 20 years I've been dealing with mental illness, I wish that I could say that my symptoms completely got better (in the sense that I am not symptomatic), but for me, my "awareness" is all that has improved.

And, don't get me wrong—that is major (and, is something I have personally worked on)!

How about any other symptoms I haven't touched upon?

Hearing voices and being involved in "internal" conversations with myself (that I do not wish to be, and that I sometimes do not realize I am involved in), are also a problem.

In addition, I have a very difficult time with motivation, which both my medication and illness play a part in!

I do accept my situation and aim for improvement, which some of that is in my control, and some of it isn't.

So, I just do my best, which oftentimes looks like (for me) engaging in activities that both help to distract me and keep me focused!

And, I do this as often as possible, every day!

As everyone with mental illness experiences symptoms differently, all of our jobs (in my humble opinion) are to just “try.”

It sucks, yes—and, we wouldn’t wish any of what we go through on our worst enemies (as I’ve said), but it is our current reality—and, one that we do better by facing—if and when we can!

I would also like to say, that I am not typical for my diagnosis.

I have, gratefully, been able to do a lot of personal work (aka personal development) on raising my level of “awareness” over the past 20 years—having made more strides in the past five.

I have decent insight into my situation, yes, and I am (what you might generally call) more “aware.”

What I personally deal with every day

Delusions — False beliefs or “ideas” that are simply not true. My mind will often trick me into believing that my experiences are “real,” so my job is to investigate them (as I am able), or look for “proof” as to whether what I am feeling is “real” or not.

Anxiety — I am often afflicted with anxiety, but I don’t tend to view myself as being anxious. The reason being, I don’t want to overlook the other, more serious symptoms I have. Anxiety in itself is bad, but I err on the side of caution (when reporting anxiety symptoms), due to my other symptoms outranking those of generalized anxiety.

Depression — I experience depression every day (along with all of the other symptoms I have). I feel as though, I have a good level of control over depression, more than I do some of my other symptoms. But, I am still affected daily. And, at times, the depression is more disconcerting than everything else I go through.

Hallucinations — In terms of hallucinations, I typically experience auditory vs. visual hallucinations. My auditory hallucinations are ever present, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between them and my delusions. One might think that making out one's "voices" is somehow easy, but I am often not aware of their hold on me, until I've engaged with my "voices" for a bit of time.

Lack of motivation — The clinical term for this in schizophrenia is having a "negative symptom," of which, I have the particular "negative symptom" of lacking motivation (and, have had it since before my final diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder). This symptom affects my energy levels, and generally means, that it is difficult for me to do chores, make a meal from scratch, or get myself off of the couch.

I wish that I could tell you, that there are some days when the aforementioned issues are not "present" in my life.

But, sadly, that has not been my experience.

"Stable" and "functioning"

Now, you may be wondering, what are some of the things that are helping (and have helped me), to get me to where I am today.

They are:

- 1 Meds.
- 2 Mental health help (and, writing down questions for my providers).
- 3 Restful sleep (attaining and maintaining this is personally among my greatest challenges).
- 4 Time.
- 5 Introspection (and, finding out some of what triggers me).
- 6 Relationships (even the bad ones have taught me something).
- 7 Failure (lots and lots of failure).
- 8 Success.
- 9 Support system.

- 10 Reading / learning / personal development / social skills.
- 11 Journaling or writing (like many of the items on this list, this has added insight)!
- 12 Not drinking and not doing street drugs.
- 13 Being in a low-stress environment.
- 14 Being vulnerable.
- 15 Establishing boundaries.
- 16 Quitting, but also realizing that at some point, I have to stick to something (regardless of what that may be).
- 17 Trying—every day—trying (in other words, to always be working on small goals, which I set often)!
- 18 A solid set of beliefs.
- 19 Activity when I can (whether it be hobbies, volunteering, or working).
- 20 Patience.

Care to connect?

What are some of the things that have helped you (or a loved one) to cope with having a mental illness? What are you / they struggling with?

I will not mention you on the site “in any way,” unless you have given me permission to do so!

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Thanks for reading!