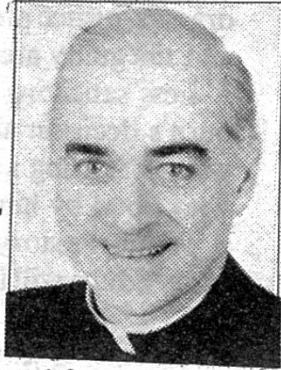


LIVE GLADLY

Mental illness is the most painful form of human suffering. It is all-pervasive, affecting the whole personality, body and soul. And there are no quick cures. Experienced health care practitioners know that in this form of illness recovery cannot be rushed. About 25 percent of the hospital beds in the U.S. are filled by mental patients, more than the total for cancer, heart disease and respiratory illness patients combined according to a report in the U.S. News & World Report. [April 24, 1989]



Those of us who are not professionals in the field of mental health have great difficulty caring for the mentally sick. We almost expect normal behavior, and we tend to blame the sick person for not trying hard

enough. Their mood swings are hard to bear and we become impatient, waiting for changes that never seem to come.

What are we to do in the presence of such a baffling condition? How are we supposed to act?

Perhaps we can begin by facing the fact that there are no easy answers. We cannot ignore our limitations, or overestimate our capacity to advance the healing process.

Sick people in general can be easily hurt. It's important not to impose unrealistic expectations on them. It's equally important not to blame yourself when progress is frustratingly slow. With prayer and patience, healing may come, but rarely as fast as we would like.

To survive the ordeal of caring for a loved one in this condition, it is wise to remember that you are not superhuman, you cannot take responsibility for the happiness of another. Each of us is responsible for our

own happiness. If you really want to help, make sure that you preserve your own peace and sanity. Try to make them as comfortable as possible, but understand that happiness is not yours to give.

You may not understand it, but even the strangest forms of human behavior have their reasons. People take care of themselves as best they can; they withdraw, they become hostile, they enter another reality, all as a way of protecting themselves. Trying to get them to change too quickly will often be taken as a threat.

Sometimes the best anyone can do is simply to be there and walk the path of pain with them. If you're willing to do that, you're probably a saint and you don't know it.

If you hope to persevere, please take good care of yourself. Claim God's healing and strength for yourself. Make up your mind

that nothing this person says or does is going to throw you. Repeat the phrase, I am a happy person, nothing you do or say is going to rob me of my joy. At times you'll have to steel yourself to keep from reacting negatively.

Remember, the greatest honor you can give to Almighty God is to live gladly because of the knowledge of His love. Your faith in this simple truth will support you in all your efforts to be a loving person. If you really allow the Lord to be your strength and your joy, you'll never have to worry about becoming discouraged.

[For a free copy of the Christopher News Note, Courage: You Have What It Takes, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.]

