REMOVING THE INVISIBILITY CLOAK:

FINDING ALLIES WHEN YOU FEEL UNSEEN

Discussion Leader: Andrea Kwamya

Defining
Mental Health & Mental Illness

- **Mental Health** is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

- **Mental Illness** is defined as "collectively all diagnosable mental disorders" or "health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning."

- *CDC Mental Health Basics*

When it's close to home

- How many of you know more than one person that suffers from a mental illness?

- What do you consider mental illness?

- Can you tell when you see someone with a mental illness?

My Story:
Living with Depression & Adult ADD

- *Andrea Kakra Afua Nyakato Adyeri Tay*
- *(Ghanaian/Ugandan American)*

Aren't more people mentally healthy than ill?

- No. About 17% of people are considered to have good mental health.

- The leading mental illness today is major depression which afflicts about 26% of people due to biologic, physical and circumstantial reasons.

Why are we so desperate for people to UNDERSTAND our invisible illness?

invisibleillnessweek.com

What are your triggers?

- Activity 1
- Make a list of at least 5 things that trigger your anxiety
- Think about how they affect you everyday
- What do you wish you could change?

Negative Coping Behaviors:

ways we avoid interaction

- Gambling
- Over-Shopping
- Pornography Abuse
- Gaming Addiction
- Cybersex Addictions
- Gossip Blogs (i.e. Perez Hilton)

Temptation to use media as means of Self-medication:

- Anonymity
- Social Interaction
- Engrossed in Fantasy Life
- Bullying can be "deleted" or cut off
- Dissociative affect of gaming or television
- Sense of denial "I feel good while I'm online"

Integrating back into the Community: Going back to school or work after hospitalizations

- Will my friends/family still be there to support me?

- Am I strong enough to support someone else?

- Should I tell me job or school about my illness?

Are my relationships fulfilling?

- Activity:2

- *What are your relationship fears?*

- *How do you think your friends and family perceive you?*

- *How would you like them to be better?*

Activity 2

- Take 5 minutes to practice saying hi to your neighbor

- Share what you are enjoying about the conference

- Note if you shared the same triggers

- (Be conscious of your self care. This is optional . Share only if you are comfortable.)

Friendships

- Making friends at a new job/ new school or new town
  - Awkwardness
  - Building trust
  - Expressing clear needs
  - Setting Boundaries

How can we take power back from our triggers?

- Practicing positive morning mantras

- Find positive alternatives to self blame

- Remember your support systems

The Positive Aspects of the internet

- Self Help Applications – IPod & Android
- Mental Health Support Forums
- Social Awareness to hidden problems
- Using Social Media to Speak out
  - [Pastor Rick Warren discusses son Matthew Warrens Suicide](#)
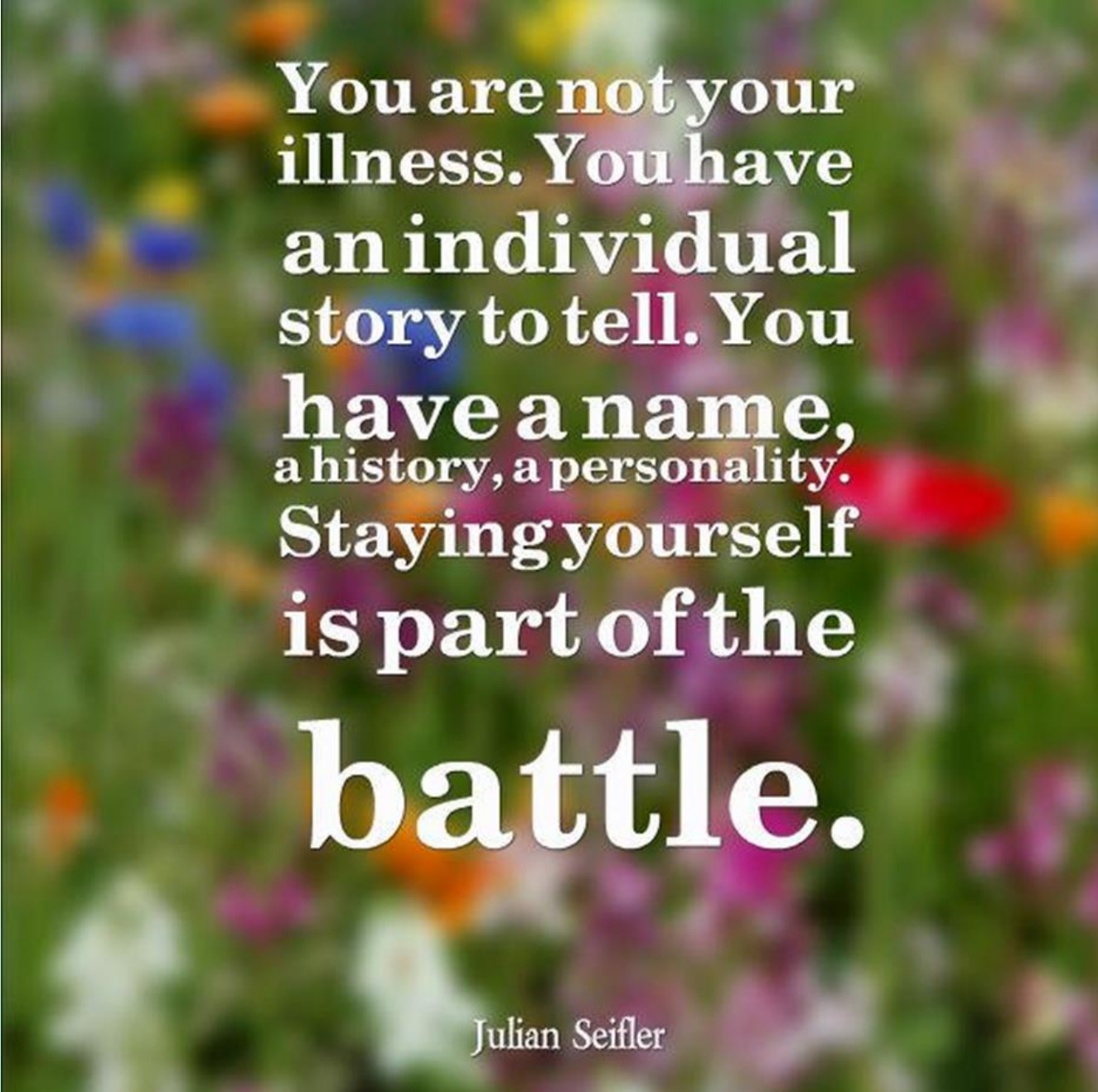
Coping Skills

- Dress for success
- Learning to ask for help
- Meditation
- Put the Helpline on speed dial
- Write a letter to someone who made you feel bad
- Write a letter to thank your biggest supporter

Adonai Gray:
Feb 16 1990 – Dec 2nd 2006 (Chinese American)

You are not your illness. You have an individual story to tell. You have a name, a history, a personality. Staying yourself is part of the battle.

Julian Seifler