



What About the Kids?

Rationale and Resources for Supporting
Teens of Parents Who Have Experienced
Trauma or Who Have a Mental Illness

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Objectives

- Scope of the issue
- Effects on youth
 - Clinical lore
 - Research
- Explain helpful interventions for these youth (what do these kids need?)
- Review the availability of programs and resources for professionals, parents, and youth



Scope of the Issue

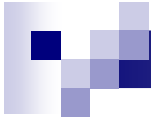
- 1 in 5 youth has a family member living with a serious mental illness (SMI)
 - Over 5 million children in the United States live with a parent with a mental illness
- 1 in 8 youth has a family member dealing with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)



Adults with a SMI/PTSD are just as likely as those without to be parents

- Overall, the prevalence of parenthood:
 - 68% of women living with SMI are mothers
 - 57% of men living with SMI are fathers

Nicholson et al 2000



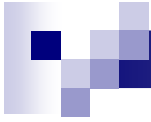
| <u>Disorders</u> | <u>Mothers/ Women</u> | <u>Fathers/ Men</u> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Affective | 67% | 58% |
| Anxiety | 68% | 56% |
| PTSD | 73% | 68% |
| Psychosis | 62% | 55% |

Nicholson, J., Biebel, K., Williams, V.F., & Katz-Leavy, J. (2004) Prevalence of Parenthood in Adults with Mental Illness: Implications for State and Federal Policy, Programs, and Providers. In Center for Mental Health Services. Mental Health, United States, 2002. Manderscheid, R.W., & Henderson, M.J., eds. DHHS Pub No. (SMA) 3938. Rockville, Maryland: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, pp. 120-137.



Many families experience traumatic events

- Military combat
- Family violence
- Natural disasters
- Man-made disaster or terrorism
- Sexual assault
- School shooting
- Mugging, kidnapping, other violent crime



- Over 3 million children in the United States are exposed to domestic violence every year
 - On average, children compose 40% of the domestic violence shelter population

- Per the Pentagon, 60% of military personnel are parents

- 
- Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan are encountering very difficult experiences:

Survey of 894 Army soldiers from OIF:

- * 95% observed dead bodies or human remains
- * 93% were shot at or received small-arms fire
- * 89% were attacked or ambushed
- * 65% observed injured or dead Americans
- * 48% were responsible for the death of an enemy combatant

Hoge et al., 2004



Sources of Information about Effects on Children

- **Clinical literature**
- **Research on these youth**
 - **Mental illness**
 - **PTSD**
- **Reports of “adult” children**

Effects on the Kids – Clinical Lore

- Kids may experience parent as hostile, scary, distant, or overprotective
- Children may feel anxious, ashamed, sad, and angry



hugh grant
rachel weisz toni collette

about a boy






Effects on the Kids

Symptoms of the illness, detachment, and emotional numbing may directly impact the parent's ability to engage the child in everyday activities

Kids may feel uncared for, unloved, left out, and lonely





And at home she went to pieces. She scarcely got up to make the girls breakfast or to see them off to school in the morning, and she was often still lying in bed in the back room, drinking gin and smoking, when they came home in the afternoon. They would come to her room and stand in the doorway and look at her. Sometimes they would lie down on the bed beside her and go to sleep in that place that used to be so pleasant and comfortable. More often now the two sisters would fight with each other when they were home and she would call them to stop, but other times she would simply get up and shut the door and light a cigarette and lie down again.

Description of Mary Wells in *Eventide* by Kent Haruf, 2004



Common Youth Responses

- Detach and avoid -- act as if they don't care
- Act as rescuer and assume parental responsibilities (role reversal)
- Over-identify and take on the parent's symptoms
- Experience separation anxiety and be clingy -- struggle with issues of autonomy and independence
- "Act out" to get attention
- Worry about "catching" the parent's problems
- Feel abandoned and alienated from the family



Research Base – Mental Illness

- Youth growing up with parents dealing with emotional problems are at greater risk of having behavioral/emotional problems due to **both** genetic factors and deleterious psychosocial experiences (Compas et al., 2002; Nicholson, 2002)
- Rates of child psychiatric diagnosis among offspring range from 30-50% (vs. 20% in general population) (Nicholson et al 2000)



More Specifically...

- Youth found to be at considerable risk for
 - Behavioral problems (Rutter & Quinton, 1984)
 - Major depressive disorder (Beardslee et al., 1998)
 - Anxiety disorders (Nomura et al., 2002)

- Longitudinal research of offspring has documented that these outcomes often persist into adulthood (Beardslee et al, 1993; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1988)
 - Even at 10 year follow up (Nomura et al, 2002)



Child outcomes appear to be related to many variables (e.g., child coping skills, poverty, social support, access to treatment) alone

AND

in combination with parent's mental illness

Nicholson, 2005



Research Base – PTSD

- Interviews of 1,200 male Vietnam veterans & 367 partners
 - Children of PTSD veterans were more likely to have more OVERALL & more SEVERE behavior problems than kids of non-PTSD Vietnam veterans - based on mom's report on Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)

National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS)

Jordan et al., 1992; Kulka et al., 1988



Reports of “Adult” Children

■ **Negatives:**

- isolation**
- poor self esteem**
- angry**
- ashamed**
- anxious**
- relationship problems**

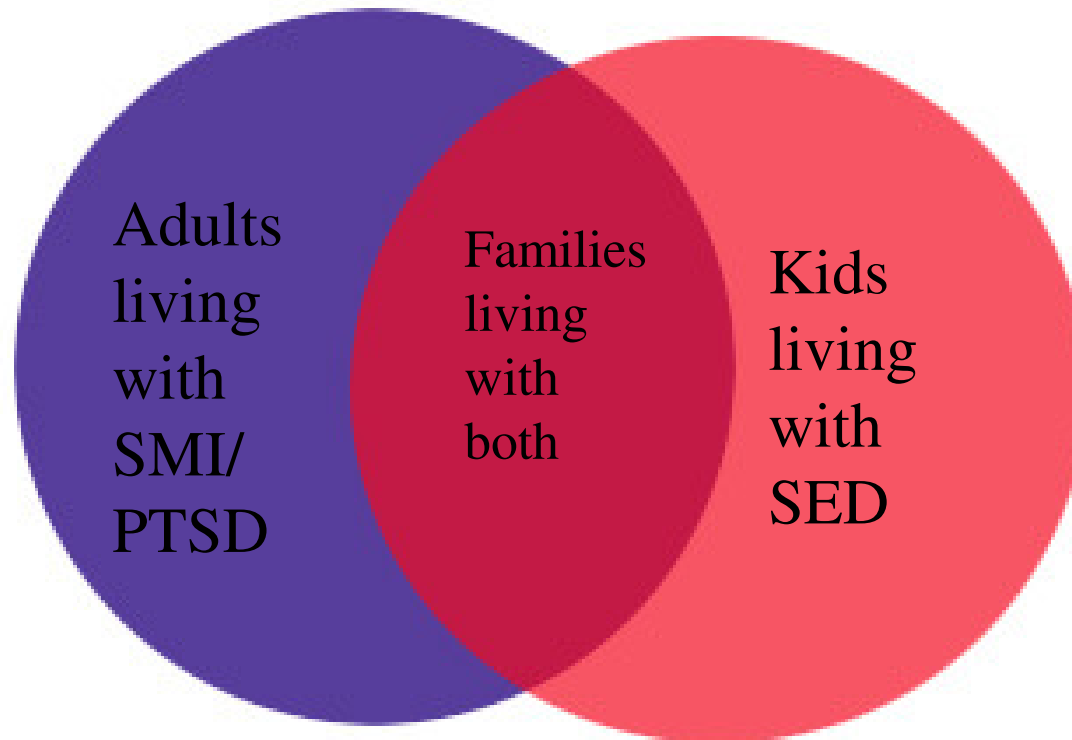
■ **Positives:**

- personal strength**
- independence**
- compassion**
- sensitivity**
- resourcefulness**
- life skills**


Diane Marsh



Overlapping Issues & Needs



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of Joanne Nicholson, Ph.D.



However, children of parents with a mental illness or PTSD usually receive little attention. British child and adolescent psychiatrist, Dr. Alan Cooklin, said:

“Children with a parent with mental illness often fall through the cracks and are seen as nobody's responsibility. Nothing is explained to them, and they often receive no help at all to deal with the effects of the parent's illness. These children need to be seen and heard.”

It is time to

SEE

and

HEAR

these young people!






What Do These Youth Need?

1. **Reassurance** that they're not alone

2. **Honest acknowledgement of the parent's difficulties**

- Even if the parent is trying to protect the children, youth may feel quite resentful, even years later



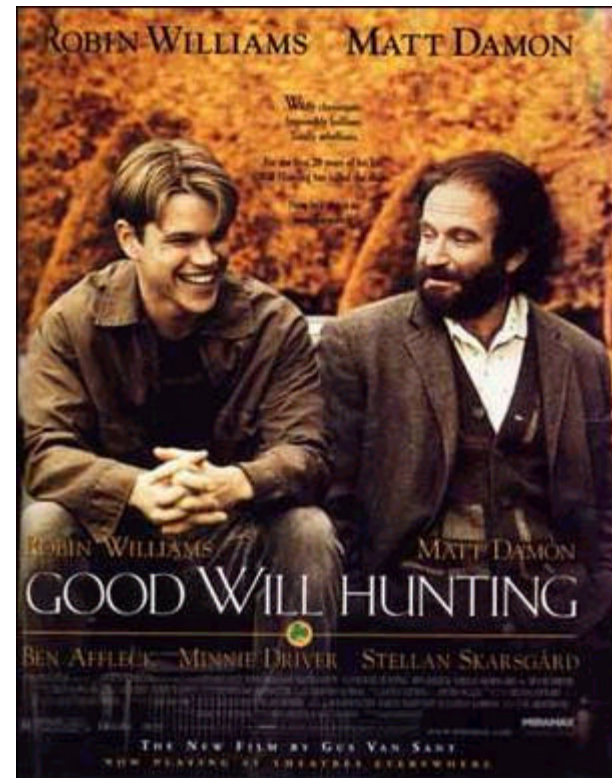
3. Information about the illness / PTSD. People (kids especially) fear what they do not understand. Kids need answers to questions like:

- What is going on?
 - Why is this happening to me?
 - What do I tell my friends?
 - How can I make my parent better?
 - Will I be like my parent someday?
-
- Research with individuals on an inpatient psychiatric unit indicates that parents want their children to have age-appropriate information on mental illness because youth often form misconceptions about parental functioning in the absence of accurate information.

Wang & Goldschmidt, 1996; Delvin & OBrien, 1999

4. To be told that they are not to blame

They didn't do anything wrong!



5. To know that their parent loves them (even when the parent behaves in rejecting ways that can be quite confusing and hurtful to the child)



“Before I deployed down range I was different about my wife and kids. Now that I’m back I can only let them get so close before I have to get away from them. I used to have fun letting my boys jump and crawl all over me. We would spend hours playing like that. Now I can only take a couple of minutes of it before I have to get out. I usually get in my truck and drive back to the base to be with my platoon.”

(A paratrooper home from Iraq, quoted in *Down Range to Iraq and Back* by Bridget Cantrell & Chuck Dean)



6. To be able to be kids

(while parents maintain appropriate routines, structure, and boundaries)

“Forever I wanted to take on the burdens of my family...

I finally learned I didn’t have to do that.

The faster you can figure that out, the better.”

(quoted in *I’m Not Alone: A Teen’s Guide to Living with a Parent Who Has a Mental Illness*)



7. **Support in dealing with stigma** and their friends
8. **Social support** from relationships with healthy adults and teens in the extended family / community / school
9. **Empowerment**
Ideas on how they can support their parent
10. **Hope**
It's important for kids to know that many effective treatments are available



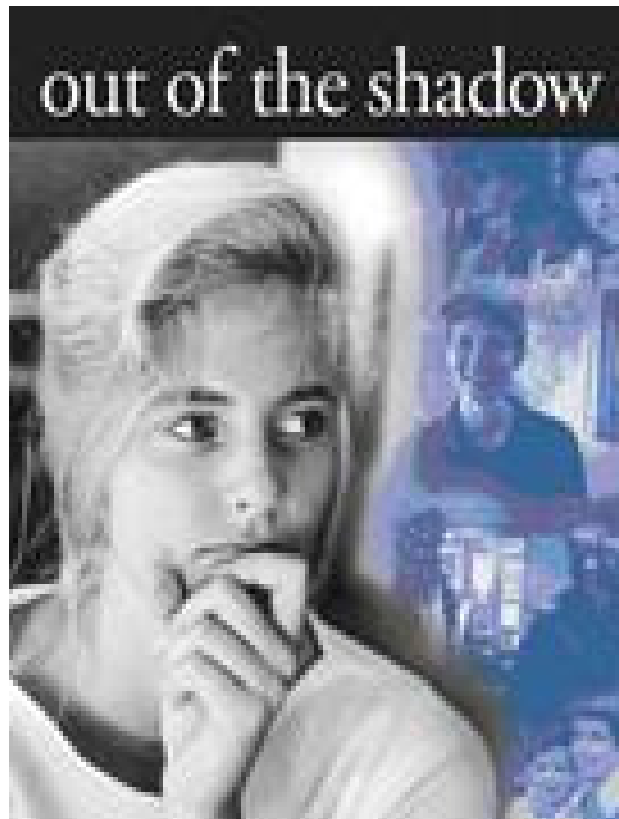
Efforts to Accomplish These Goals

- Media attention
- Programs
- Research on manualized programs
- Books for professionals / bibliotherapy

Out of the Shadow

Susan Smiley


(www.outoftheshadow.com)





Invisible Children's Project

- Begun in 1993 by Mental Health Association in Orange County, NY – now being supported by NMHA
- Provides home-based, **family-centered** case management for PARENTAL mental illness
- Goals:
 - Help all family members access and coordinate services
 - Help adults with parenting skills
 - Help parents create safe, nurturing environment for their children
- Preliminary data are promising – but not yet widely disseminated nor rigorously evaluated



National Network of Adult and Adolescent Children who have a Mentally Ill Parent/s - Australia

■ Goals:

- Mutual support (self-help groups, discussion groups, counseling)
- Advocacy
- Education

www.nnaami.org



COMIC: Children of Mentally Ill Consumers (Australia)

- Mission (2000): To Advocate and Promote Awareness for Children of Mentally Ill Consumers:

- ADVOCACY
- EDUCATION (School Curriculum)
- INFORMATION (“Supporting Our Family” Kit)
- SUPPORT (Support Groups)

<http://www.howstat.com/comic/Home.asp>

COPMI: Children of Parents with a Mental Illness

www.copmi.net.au



NAMI Community

- Daughters and Sons of Parents with Mental Illness: The Third Generation
- Joe Donovan



Intervention studies:

■ William Beardslee et al 2003:

Provided manualized preventive psycho-ed intervention to depressed parents & their healthy teenage children

Goals:

- Provide information about depression to parents
- Promote resilience & minimize risk factors
- Open dialogue between parents & children about depression

Results:

- Found increased child understanding of parental MI and decreased child internalizing scores (2.5 yrs post-tx)



■ Greg Clarke et al 1995 / 2001

Provided a CBT group therapy to healthy teens (age 13-18) of parents treated for depression in an HMO

Goals:

- Cognitive restructuring therapy to reduce risk for depression among these youth

Results:

- Over 15 month follow-up, significant advantage for teens in group (9.3% cumulative major depression incidence) compared to usual-care control condition (28.8%), $p=.003$)



Books and Bibliotherapy on Parental Mental Illness

- For Professionals
- For Parents
- For Youth
 - Elementary school youth
 - Teenagers



Resources for Professionals

- *Out of the darkened room: Protecting the children and strengthening the family when a parent is depressed* (Beardslee, 2002)
- *The welfare of children with mentally ill parents: Learning from inter-country comparisons* (Hetherington et al., 2001)
- *Parental psychiatric disorder: Distressed parents and their families* (Gopfert, Webster & Seeman, 2004)
- *Psychological first aid* (manual from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network) Available online: www.nctsn.org
- *Helping children cope with the challenges of war and terrorism* [for kids ages 7-12] (Annette M. LaGreca, Ph.D. et al.) Available online: www.7-dippity.com/other/UWA_war_book.pdf



Resources for Parents

- *When a parent is depressed: How to protect your children from the effects of depression in the family* (Beardslee, 2003)
- *Parenting well when you're depressed: A complete resource for maintaining a healthy family* (Nicholson et al., 2001)
- *Sorrow's web: Overcoming the legacy of maternal depression* (Sheffield, 2000)



Resources for Elementary School Age Picture Books / Stories - Mental Illness

- *Why are you so sad? A child's book about parental depression* (Andrews, 2002)
- *Sometimes my mommy gets angry* (Campbell, 2003)



Picture Books [Out of print]

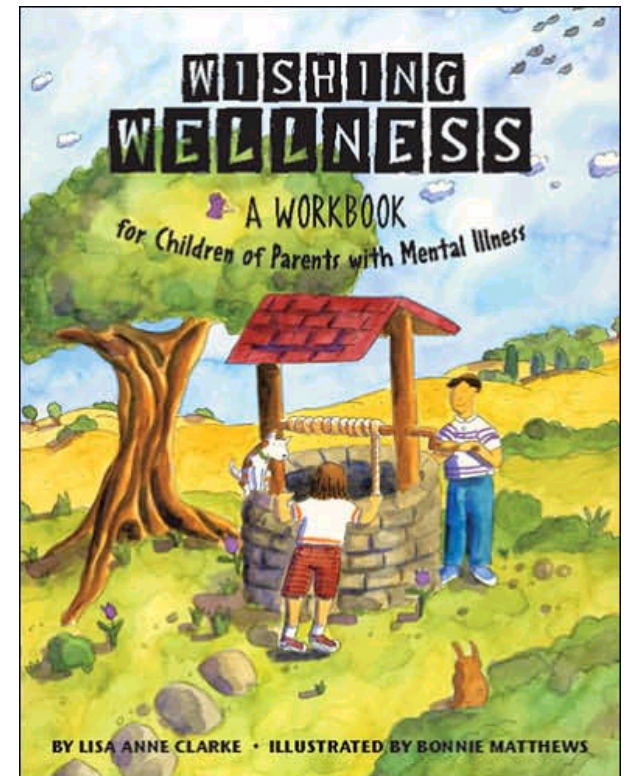
- *Bart speaks out: Breaking the silence on suicide* (Goldman, 1998)
- *Sad days, glad days* (Hamilton, 1995)
- *Our special Mom and Our special Dad* (Sobkiewicz, 1994) - Children of Mentally Ill Parents
- *Please don't cry, Mom* (Denboer, 1993)
- *Tell me a story, paint me the sun: When a girl feels ignored by her father* (Chaplan, 1991)
- *Wish upon a star: A story for children with a parent who is mentally ill* (Laskin & Moskowitz, 1991)

Resources for Elementary School Age

Interactive Books - Mental Illness

Wishing wellness: A workbook for children of parents with mental illness

(Clarke, 2006)





Resources for Elementary School Age

Picture Books / Stories - Trauma / War

- *Why is Daddy like he is? A book for kids about PTSD* (Mason, 1992)
- *Daddy, you're my hero! // Mommy, you're my hero!* [for kids ages 4-8] (Ferguson-Cohen, 2005)
- *Something is wrong at my house: A book about parents' fighting* (Davis, 1984)
- *Real life heroes: A life storybook for children* (Kagan, 2003)



Resources for Teenagers

Informational Books - Mental Illness

- *Mental health information for teens: Health tips about mental health and mental illness, including facts about mental and emotional health, depression and other mood disorders, anxiety disorders, behavior disorders, self-injury, psychosis, schizophrenia, and more* (Bellenir, 2006). \$65.00, 400 pgs
- *Coping when a parent is mentally ill* (Ross, 2001) [out of print]
- *Nothing to be ashamed of: Growing up with mental illness in your family* (Dinner, 1989) [out of print]
- *Understanding mental illness: For teens who care about someone with a mental illness* (Johnson, 1989) [out of print]



Resources for Teenagers

Parental Mental Illness



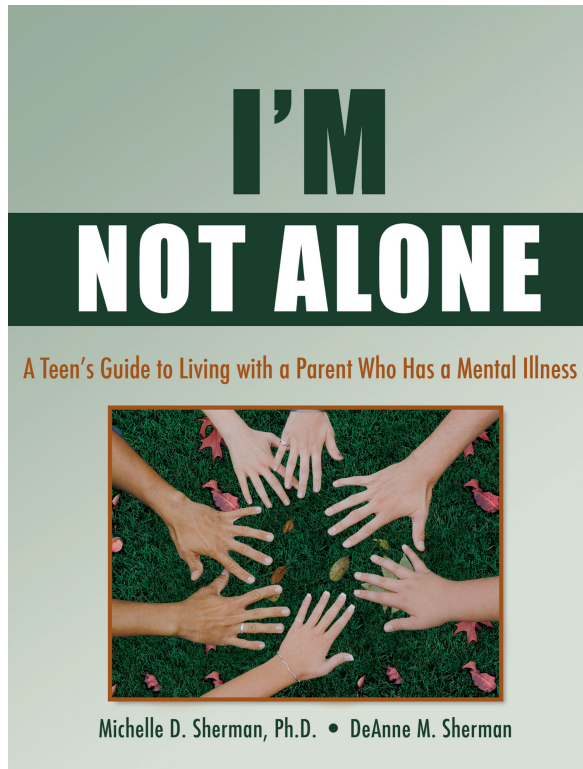
Resources for Teenagers

Parental Trauma

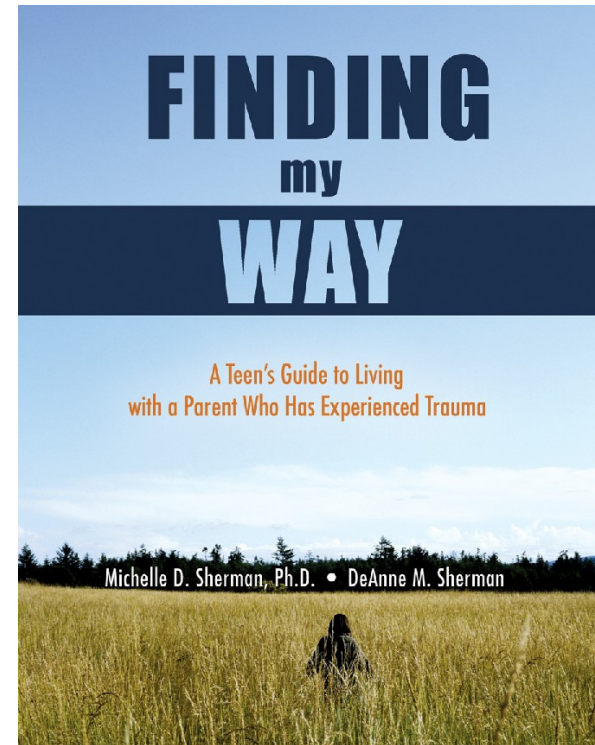
New Interactive Resources for Teenagers

Mental Illness

Trauma / PTSD



I'm Not Alone: A Teen's Guide to Living with a Parent who Has a Mental Illness



Finding My Way: A Teen's Guide to Living with a Parent who Has Experienced Trauma



I'm Not Alone

Depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia

Sample Chapters:

What is this whole “mental illness” thing anyway?

Understanding mental illness

What are the different types of mental illness?

Schizophrenia, major depression, and bipolar disorder

Why does my parent have these problems?

The causes of mental illness

Who and what can help my parent?

My parent's treatment plan

What do I tell other people?

Dealing with my friends

What can I do to help?

Tips on supporting my parent



Finding My Way

What is my parent going through?

The facts about trauma and PTSD

Why MY parent? And why NOW?

Risk factors for developing PTSD

Why is my parent so tense and sad?

Anxiety and depression

Why does my parent turn to alcohol and drugs?

Common addictions among trauma survivors

Are all of my feelings normal?

Understanding my strong emotions

How can I cope with all of this?

Tools for getting through rough times

Who can I count on?

Identifying people who can support me



I'm Not Alone and *Finding My Way* provide:

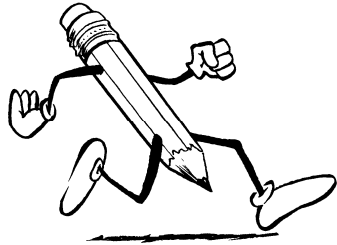
- Comfort in knowing that they are not alone
- Facts presented in clear, concise language
- Opportunities for reflection and journaling
- Tips on healthy coping skills
- Help in identifying supportive people and in dealing with friends
- Encouragement to take good care of themselves
- Resources for further learning
- Support, encouragement, and hope



Educational / Interactive Elements

- Short stories depicting:
 - Parental reactions to trauma
 - Common responses among youth
 - Adaptive coping strategies for teens
- Reflection questions
- “Think about a time when...”
- Open-ended sentences
- Inspirational quotes and poems
- 8 key lessons

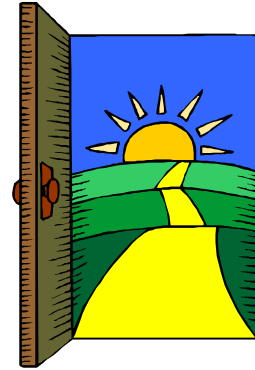
Power of Writing



HOW ABOUT MY FAMILY?

- Research by Dr. James Pennebaker has clearly documented the many physical and psychological benefits of writing, especially about upsetting emotions.

Opportunities for Growth



- The books strives to stimulate helpful discussions
- Going through difficulties can bring families closer
- Family members may discover strengths, resilience, and courage in themselves and each other
- Families can grow by communicating openly and supporting one another – so that they can navigate future difficulties more effectively



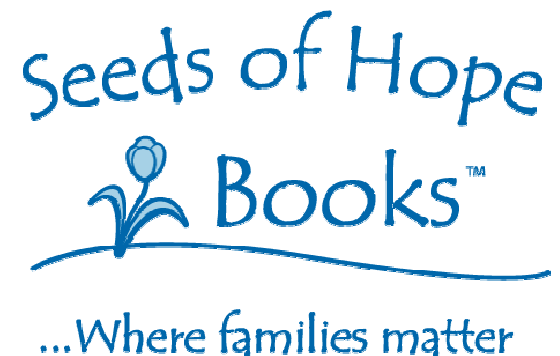
Seeds of Hope Books

Only available at:

www.seedsofhopebooks.com

or

1-800-901-3480, x118

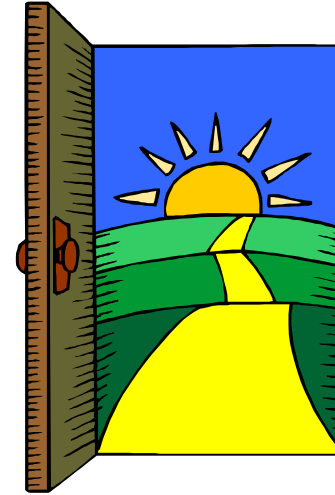




Memoirs by Adults

- *Saving Millie: A daughter's story of surviving schizophrenia* (Kotulski, late 2006)
- *In the shadow of madness* (Brandon, 2000)
- *The outsider: A journey into my father's struggle with madness* (Lachenmeyer, 2000)
- *My mother's keeper: A daughter's memoir of growing up in the shadow of schizophrenia* (Holley, 1997)

Many opportunities await us...



May we embrace this challenge as we
HEAR and SEE these children!