

I know what it is like to be bundled into a police van, handcuffed behind my back, and driven for hours looking for a mental hospital to admit me.

Having suffered from bi-polar disorder all my life - frequently depressed, occasionally manic:

I know what depression is like, week after week, sometimes months on end, being unable to get up and face the simplest task.

I too know Churchill's Black Dog.

I am now on stabilisers, which help enormously

but my great good fortune, sadly available to the tiniest minority,

is to have been in (Jungian) analysis - at one period four times per week.

I cannot imagine my life without it.

Virtually no one until now has known this - neither my community nor my colleagues.

The stigma is too great; the fear of disapproval and rejection.

So why now, here, today?

Encountering mental health issues, as a rabbi is time consuming and bewildering -

- yet all the indications are that the incidence of mental ill-health is rising:

- 12.5 million more tablets were prescribed for depression in 2012 than in 2007;
- 1 in 4 people will encounter a mental health issue during the course of a year.

- However: while mental health is 28% of the country's disease burden it only receives 13% of the funding.

Some people have to wait up to a year, in unimaginable distress, for any form of help!

Worst of all:

50% of lifetime mental illness starts before the age of 14,

yet 76% of children aged 5 to 15 with mental health problems are receiving no treatment

and the amount spent on children is, unbelievably, being reduced!

What can we make of all this?

Most people believe

First: that mental illness is a problem only for the individuals and families affected and

Second: that it is an issue only for 'First World people', those with the luxury of too much money and time:

Both these assumptions are false: the costs of mental illness are horrendous both here and throughout the world, especially when we include the needs of those suffering from

- autism,
- Alzheimer's & senile dementia
- addictions - drugs, alcohol, gambling, sex, pornography, paedophilia,
- eating disorders,
- self-harm,
- Sometimes even suicide,

Further:

Up to 15% of incidents with which the police deal are thought to have some kind of mental health dimension.

More than 70% of prisoners have two or more serious mental health problems

And

According to the Mayor's statistics, 46 per cent of rough sleepers have mental health needs

All these afflictions therefore affect not only the individual and their immediate family but society itself via direct and indirect costs.

Mental and personality disorders often prevent the afflicted from

- working,
- studying,
- caring for others,
- producing, and
- consuming

The overall economic costs are vast.

Increased investment in treatment therefore benefits not only those who suffer;

it pays for itself

and will reap dividends -

Once we remove the stigma and treat mental illness the same way we do physical disabilities and illnesses.

Which means that those of us who know what it is

must speak out.