WALKING THE TALK
Bringing Social Justice and Diversity to Direct Practice

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017 | 8:30AM - 5:30PM

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Walking the Talk: Bringing Social Justice and Diversity to Direct Practice | socialwork.nyu.edu/walkingthetalk

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MSW ’18

PRESENTATION
The Impact of Culture on Notions of Mental Health and Mental Illness: One Daughter's Story
The Impact of Culture on Notions of Mental Health & Mental Illness: One Daughter’s Story

and here you are living
despite it all

- rupi kaur

Presented by Rachel Seungyun Shin
The Social Justice & Diversity Grant Conference
April 3rd, 2017
What is Mental Health?

Mental Health: “The successful performance of mental functions, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity”

- Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health
“My mother wasn’t crazy”

“Had to leave everything and everyone she once knew”

“Pressures of being a young wife and mother”

“Forced into isolation”
“Discrimination and racism”

“You’re crazy”

“Snap out of it”

“Chinks”

“Dependency on alcohol = her means of escaping her reality”
“She was alone”

“I had community, she had no one”

“Her only anchor to reality was her identity as a mother”
Q: How do you explain the concept of mental health to someone who has been hurting and struggling for so long due to the impact of negative stigma, hurtful labels, and cultural differences?
**Awareness**

- Becoming aware of someone’s struggle with mental illness can take just a few moments of interaction or even years.
- In my experience, awareness is the very first important aspect of understanding mental health and its effects on someone.
Understanding

• Once there is awareness, a deeper understanding of the person’s situation and environment can develop.

• This understanding can serve as a bridge between awareness and empathy.
Empathy

• Actually giving a damn can be the more difficult step. We can use all the “bio-psycho-social” perspective we can, but being competent is only the first step
• Always start from a place of empathy, compassion, and show that you care about the person
• That position of humility and compassion will be the meaningful beginning to building a deeper relationship with that individual in distress and subsequently enter into the road of recovery.
What About Me?
When something bad happens, you have three choices. You can either let it define you, let it destroy you, or you can let it strengthen you.

No pain no flowers
What is Mental Health ______?

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- Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health
What is Mental Health *to me*?

... My mother picking up her cello again
... My mother being able to find a community where she feels loved and understood
... My mother not being afraid to speak her mind and heart when she is struggling
... My mother dreaming again

... My mother’s happiness.
CONQUER FROM WITHIN