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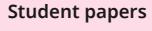
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Narrative Essay: How understanding (or misunderstanding) mental health shaped the experiences  
of someone dear to me

Since childhood, and why only say childhood, it has been decades since our ancestors have believed in the power of silence and ignorance being bliss. However, this has clearly shattered our family into bits and pieces. I realized it just when the time had passed, and now only a little can be done. Alina, a cousin of mine, who has been my best friend as well, is the one who made me endorse the fact that understanding mental health is the most important thing and nothing comes above this. Her story is a series of events that have been taken as normal for a long time, but they do have a lasting impact on the subconscious mind, and all this implies the need to take care of the mind.

While growing up from a child to a younger adult, Alina was a very sharp and bright person. Not only did she excel academically, but she was also very athletic as she played badminton at a regional level. However, she always kept quiet. Despite being her younger cousin sister and having a close bond, she would rarely talk about her family to me. Her parents would also not communicate with her as they were more focused on their elder kid, who was to be enrolled in a reputed university at that time. However, she had clearly shown signs of distress and anxiety, as I would notice her biting her nails and continuously rubbing her hands. Irrespective of all these signs, I and her family all ignored it as these are all the normal things that we have been seeing since a long time and everyone gets over with it.

Time, however, did not heal anything. Instead, the distress deepened her sentiments started getting hurt even more to the extent that she had lost her integrity. She stopped playing badminton, and her grades were falling completely to the extent that she failed her math midterm. Her family was “misunderstanding” her to a greater extent and started calling her crazy and self-absorbed. They did not help her at all and grounded her in her room. Alina, who was already anxious, was now in more trouble, and I added to her weight even more by just telling her to “snap out of it”. I deeply regret it as I, being an educated person too, fell in the orthodox thoughts that are no longer applicable.

The major turning point in her life was when she called me and said, “I think I should just suffocate to death”. This was when I realized that she needed professional help. I was in a state of agony as it was 11:00 pm, and I knew that it would be difficult to take her at this time. I went to my uncle’s place and stayed with her for a night so that I could take her to a counsellor the next morning. The next morning, I discussed the situation with her parents, and they accompanied her to the counselling center.

She was diagnosed with OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and anxiety. The symptoms included continuous rubbing of hands, uneven thoughts, and negative sentiments towards everyone (Drummond and Edwards 1; Stark et al. 272). The therapist asked her to come to counselling sessions regularly for six weeks and prescribed her medicine to regulate her mood through the use of serotonin inhibitors (Gosmann et al. 1; Ralph and Cooper 752). This treatment really impacted her a lot as she started to talk with the counsellor, and her traumas were resolving one by one. Thus, her trauma was not from a single event, but from a series of events she faced throughout her life.

This story has taught me about the importance of understanding mental health at every stage of life. It taught me resilience to wait for the results, as I have seen that we had to wait for counselling sessions to complete, and even then, she took some time to become normal. Now, she is a lot better, and she is socializing with others too in an amicable way. This experience has given me a lesson for life that traumas must be resolved and mental health must be taken seriously.

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