



Paranoid Schizophrenia.

Long words for a teen to swallow, but a short answer to my age-old question: *"What's wrong with me?"*

At that time, would I expect anything different? After all I went through, the **agony of years with voices and visions**, was it really that simply put? In short, yes. But paranoid schizophrenia was just one answer. The path to my recovery was an experience I would never forget.



Northland Christian Counseling Center was one of the first places I went to for help. My eyes took in a clean facility with a friendly receptionist. A shadowy figure only I could see drifted into my mind's eye. I shook my head at it like an irksome fly, and took a breath as my heart beat fresh fear through me.

My Mom was with me, her face composed as she sat down on the couch in the waiting room. I sat with her as long as I could before I was back on my feet and pacing.

What was I doing? Was this the answer? How could one person help me, when my whole family's combined efforts couldn't? Was this even something that could be fixed?

"No. You can't be helped. You're a worthless, terrible burden who deserves no less. If you had any decency, you'd be dead already!" the voices screamed at me, as always. The shadow came back, and beckoned me to listen to my mind's terrors. I shook my head again. *"No! You aren't real, you are just fake. God Almighty, help me!"* I cried silently.

"Hello!"

A lady came to greet me, interrupting and distracting my thoughts. She spoke to me kindly and bid me to come to her office. We took a seat. I had no idea what would happen, what I should say, or what to expect. Often the unknown is feared more than fact. Given the world I lived in, I wonder why I wasn't more afraid.

My treatment was simple and direct. Schizophrenia specializes in turning truths into lies, and by then I was an expert at it. But my counselor proved to be an expert at switching the lies back to truths.

Earnestly, tirelessly, she combated the lies I brought to her office. She took up the sword of truth I no longer had the strength to hold, and delivered the striking blows to the lies I had always wanted to cut down.

One of the biggest issues was schizophrenia's persistence. My mind was a hopeless muck pit with vermin of all kinds abiding and thriving there. No sooner had they been cut down than a new one would be born! Lies spawned more lies, which were reinforced by hallucinations. That made it very easy for me to sink back to my miserable state.

But one thing schizophrenia didn't count on was my counselor. Since that first day I walked in, she made it very clear **she was fully committed to help me. She showed me there is no darkness God cannot bring to light, and nothing He has saved will be lost.**

I was prescribed an antipsychotic medication. The worst of my symptoms were caused by my brain's chemical imbalances. The medication helped regulate that imbalance, calming my symptoms.

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I saw my counselor frequently. My mind was repairing through medications' wonders, but my spirit was in sore need of comfort and hope. Though medications gave me ability to think clearly again, schizophrenia had taken much from me.

As time passed by, I soon learned I couldn't shock my counselor. My worries, my every symptom and woe, I laid them at her feet. My fears of judgement were un-called for. She treated every concern like her own.

She showed me the meaning of God's love. To not only care, but love so deeply that nothing you can say or do will change that. Along with the love, she also reared a confidence in me I never dared to have in myself.

Under her wing, I began to strengthen. She taught me that **I will always have a choice.** No voice could be louder, and not even schizophrenia could take it from me. My choice to live, and rebuke lies. My choice in every question to **look to God for the answer.**

Dearest reader, I readily admit I was blessed. Even in my darkest hours, by God's grace and mercy, my illness was not so advanced to take away my self-control. Schizophrenia is dangerous. Without proper treatment, it can reveal itself in terrible ways.

I am thankful to God for bringing me to NCCC and for the assistance I have received from the Client Assistance Fund. I am now an adult. I hold a full time job and I am able to function in society independently. I am, and always will be, on medication that will help my mental function. I still see my counselor from time to time.

Schizophrenia will always be a part of me, a part of what I am. But it will no longer be who I am. **I boldly hold that sword on my own now, and proudly combat lies with truth.** Jesus was right, as we all know or will know it. **The truth will set us free!**

– Client at Northland Christian Counseling Center

Substance Use & Mental Illness in North Dakota Adults (18+)

16.1% or **91,912**

adults have Any Mental Illness (AMI) in the past year.

4.0% or **22,835**

adults have Serious Mental Illness (SMI) in the past year.

9.1% or **51,950**

adults had a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in the past year

By **2020** mental & substance use

disorders will surpass all physical diseases as a major cause of disability worldwide.

From the 2013–2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (Population estimates from 2014 Census estimates). AMI is defined as individuals having any mental, behavior, or emotional disorder in the past year that met DSM-IV criteria, excluding developmental and substance abuse disorders. SMI is defined as adults with any mental, behavior or emotional disorder that substantially interfered with or limited one or more major life activities. Individuals with alcohol or illicit drug dependence or abuse are defined as having SUD.

Giving Hearts Day is February 9, 2017!

Serious Mental Illness, such as paranoid schizophrenia, most often requires long-term treatment and care. Through the **Northland Christian Counseling Center Client Assistance Fund**, clients can receive financial assistance to help pay for their counseling sessions, **giving the client the opportunity they desire for a restored life.**

