

undermine the fact that mentally ill are people too and can feel emotion. They feel the same hurt and pain as everyone else. It is not mentally ill individual's fault for acting the way they act. The disease takes over mentally and controls them unwillingly. I pitied my brother but I knew that his determined spirit would help him recover quickly.

After the prayer session had ended, I had an intimate conversation with my brother. He confessed that he wanted to heal but could not find a way to. Ly was aware of his declining health but could not help himself because he had no control over the situation. I reassured him that it was not his fault and that everything will get better. I promised that I would support him throughout the entire process. I felt nothing but skin and bones as we hugged but I didn't care. I love my brother for who his is and all I wanted was the best for him. We sent my brother to the mental hospital with optimistic mindsets and hope that he would recover.

My brother returned home several months later. His body was in the best condition of his life, even prior to his diagnosis. His eyes and cheeks were no longer sunken to the bare minimum. Ly was happy and flourishing with a smile that could explain it all. He returned healthy and grateful for getting him professional care. The hospital provided him with everything he needed to recover.

Throughout this entire process, I learned that the best thing to do for a mentally ill person is to reach out to them. Do not neglect their illness but instead help them seek professional help. You can help end their pain and humiliation by simply accepting those who are diagnosed with an illness. The only way to prevent these illnesses is to bring awareness to them. If you noticed that someone's physical health is deteriorating due to their mentality, try helping them before their condition worsens. Society can put an end to the negligence of mental disabilities.



EACH MIND MATTERS

California's Mental Health Movement

DON'T LET IT BE TOO LATE

by Vincent Saechao

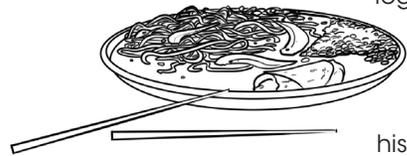
Memories that would be stored in our minds for years, delicious food, and the blissful presence of all the cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents made family gatherings special. It was a night to indulge in the traditional Mien food that covered the tabletop. There was crispy hot eggrolls fresh from the boiling pots outside, bowls overfilled with papaya salad, and extremely spicy larb waiting to be eaten. The aroma of the kasoy noodles warmed the house, creating a sense of comfort. We all knew that this would be a night to feast.

As we all gathered around the table for prayer, I noticed something peculiar about my younger brother, Ly. He looked unhappy and as I got a closer look, I realized that he had gotten much thinner. His cheek bones were more visible and his eyes were sunken in as if he was deprived of sleep. His shirt shaped his caved in chest and his arms were nothing but skin and bones. Ly looked weak, barely able to stand, as he leaned on the wall behind him. He was isolated from everyone else. I thought to myself, 'How could someone be so sad at such a joyous gathering?' Being



the concerned older brother that I am, I asked him what was wrong. He avoided eye contact and simply said there was nothing wrong. I could tell that he was lying because of his saddened stare. I decided to leave it at that and continue on with the good vibe for the rest of the night. But in the back of my mind, I knew there was something wrong with Ly.

Back at the dinner table, my family indulged in all the food as if they have not had a meal in days. They were all conversing and having a good time together. I glanced at Ly again and noticed that

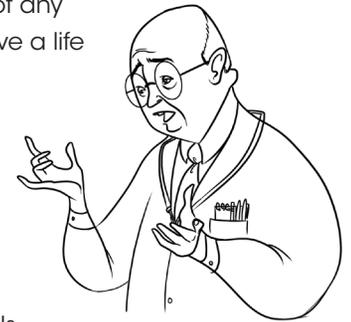


he had been using his chopsticks to pick at his plate filled with food. Then, when he thought no one would notice, he slid all of his food into a napkin on his lap. Not only was I shocked at the sight, I was also concerned so I decided to tell our mom. She didn't think too much of it and told me that it's okay and that Ly might just be on a freshman diet. She was completely oblivious to the fact that he might be sick. I doubted her words and instead took matters into my own hands. I looked up some symptoms I've noticed from observing my brother. At that moment, I realized that at age fourteen, my little brother might be suffering from a mental illness called depression.

Once everyone had said their goodbyes and went their separate ways, I approached my mom with the information I found. I saw my mother's eyes fill with tears and sadness because she actually believed me this time. Her troubled gaze observed Ly's fragile body lying on the couch. We both approached Ly and again I asked what was troubling him. Then, he shared the story of his best friend who had passed away a few weeks earlier and felt as if it was his fault. Ly and his friend were having a competition to see who could climb to the top of a tree first. As they raced, his friend slipped, only inches away from the top. Ly said he tried to catch his friend as he fell but it was too late. His eyes filled with remorseful tears as he ran to his room and locked the door. My mom and I sat there, not knowing how to respond. We prayed for hours that night, unaware as to what the future would hold. We knew things like this happen to other people, but we never thought it would happen to our family.

The next morning, we decided to bring him to the doctor's office. Hours passed before we were seen. My mom and I described to the doctor all the things happening to Ly. The doctor did in fact confirm my brother's mental illness. Research shows that nearly half of all mental disorders start by the age of fourteen and that approximately 9 million children in the United States have a serious emotional problem. Only one in five of these children receive appropriate treatments, those that never get recognized are never treated.

At this point, I didn't know how to respond. How could my brother be mentally ill? How can he possibly be depressed? I glanced at my pale mom who looked nauseated, confused, and scared. There she sat, motionless; questioning herself and what she could have done to prevent her baby boy from being mentally ill. Unaware of any possible treatment, she thought that Ly would live a life suffering from depression.



As the doctor continued, we learned that treatment is not only available, but full recovery was possible. Color flushed back into my mother's face while it began to brighten and her shoulders rose as hope filled her eyes. The doctor explained how there are mental hospitals that specialize in curing mental illnesses, such as depression. Ly needed to go to the mental facility immediately before his condition worsened. My mom said she would do whatever it takes to get Ly back into good condition. He gave us the address of a mental institute as we shook his hand with relief.



Later that day, my mom called our church members to pray for my little brother before he left for treatment. Many did not come because they were afraid that Ly would be violent simply because he had a mental disorder. In reality, many people with serious mental health challenges are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. By nature, society picks on the weak and vulnerable and discriminate people who are different. They seem to