2013 S.E. Regional CSP Retreat

Finding the Opportunity in Crisis:
How Do We Fight Stigma in the Media?

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Chinese word for **CRISIS**: 危機

*Danger*  *Opportunity*
This is what we’re dealing with.
E. Fuller Torrey: Ten percent of U.S. homicides, he estimates based on an analysis of the relevant studies, are committed by the untreated severely mentally ill – like my schizophrenic cousin. And, [Torrey] says: “I’m thinking that’s a conservative estimate.”
Media emphasize link between mental illness and:

- Dangerousness
- Criminality
- Unpredictability
CONSEQUENCES FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS:

- Impaired:
  - Self-esteem
  - Help-seeking behaviors
  - Overall recovery
But there is also an opportunity!

- Media can be an important ally in:
  - Challenging public prejudices
  - Initiating public debate
  - Projecting positive human interest stories about people in recovery
Individuals with mental health conditions* can and do recover and live productively in the community.

http://depts.washington.edu/mhreport/index.php

* Or whatever term you prefer.
Key Messages (2)

“Mental illness accounts for only a minuscule portion of the violence that afflicts American society.”

http://www.samhsa.gov/MentalHealth/understanding_MentalIllness_Factsheet.aspx

We are far more likely to be the victims than the perpetrators of violence.
“Compared with the risk associated with the combination of male gender, young age, and lower socioeconomic status, the risk of violence presented by mental disorder is modest.”

http://www.samhsa.gov/MentalHealth/understanding_MentalIllness_Factsheet.aspx
“Only one in 14 million individuals per year is killed by a stranger with a mental illness.”

http://schizophreniabulletin.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2009/10/12/schbul.sbp112.full
Myth:
We Don’t Recover

“The Facts: “. . . research has shown that with treatment, the majority of people with mental illnesses achieve genuine improvement in their symptoms over time and lead stable, productive lives. As the treatment of mental illness has advanced, the focus of treatment has shifted from simply minimizing symptoms to true recovery – that is, to reintegration into mainstream society, including (and perhaps most importantly) the world of work.”

http://www.reintegration.com/reint/employment/workplace.asp#3
When you are dealing with the media . . .

“... Make it real or else forget about it.”

-- “Smooth,” Santana, 2000
The three “C”s of dealing with the media:

- Confidence: lets you go into an interview as an equal partner
- Control: helps you communicate your message clearly
- Credibility: helps your audience believe your message

...Signova
Most reporters are generalists, not specialists

- You are:
  - an ambassador
  - a diplomat
  - a teacher
- Always educate
- Never berate.
- Write thank-you letters for good coverage!

Former Editor of The Quill (Society of Professional Journalists newsletter): He explained why mental health coverage is so bad.
Use “People First” language

- Individuals who have psychiatric histories (or some other language), not “the mentally ill”
- People who have substance use disorders, not “addicts”

Reporters may not adopt this language, but it still matters.
Reach out to the press through:

- Letters to the editor
- Op-eds
- Press releases
- Media advisories
- Telephone
- E-mail
- Fax
- Social media

Offer yourself or another spokesperson to the print and/or broadcast media.
Learn to use social media to get your message out.
Simple ways to use the newspaper to get your message out

- Letter to the editor: must be in direct response to something in the paper
- Op-ed (OPposite the EDitorial page): must *not* be in direct response
- Follow newspaper’s guidelines.
When bad things happen ... Use the “hook” and seize the moment!
Using the hook (reactive)

Springfield Mall shootings (1985): After a violent incident involving someone with a psychiatric history, Project SHARE (Philadelphia) spread messages that:

• such violence is extremely rare, and
• people with psychiatric disabilities are your “neighbors, friends and family.”
Group fears public will link mental illness, violence

By Mary Jane Fine and Donald C. Drake

Philadelphia Inquirer
PHILADELPHIA, PA
AM-454,671 S-319,384

Joseph Rogers was 19 then, a patient in a psychiatric ward and scared.

"There was real despair — the fear that I was going to be there forever," he recalled. "You're being 'put away.' You really feel that." Rogers is 33 now, associate director of the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania — and he's scared once again.

His concern this time centers on Wednesday's violence at the Springfield Mall, in which a woman with a psychiatric history has been charged with shooting nine people, killing two of them. His fear is that such incidents will lead the public to associate mental illness with violence and to be more reluctant to accept former mental patients into the community.

The founder of Project SHARE, a social group for current and former mental patients, Rogers was sufficiently concerned that he issued a news release urging a "reasoned response" to the incident.

"There are millions of former mental patients who work at their jobs, love their families, and are your neighbors," it read in part. "They are productive members of society. If the tragic actions of a few individuals mean that people like these millions will lose their freedom, this kind of tragedy will claim millions of victims, not just a few.

Ever since a 1975 U.S. Supreme Court decision, state and federal mental health laws have been designed to prevent unjust confinement of mental patients, by prohibiting involuntary commitment to a mental hospital unless the person exhibits "a clear and present danger" to himself or others.

Rogers and other members of Project SHARE — which stands for Self-Help and Advocacy Research Exchange — say they fear that a "lock 'em all up" attitude will result in the tightening of commitment laws. Amiram Elwork, a psychologist and director of the graduate program in law and psychology at Hahnemann University, said that until psychiatrists and psychologists know enough about mental illness to predict and treat violent behavior, the pendulum of societal response to the mentally ill will swing wildly from the extreme of being excessively liberal to the extreme of being excessively restrictive with mental patients.

"Current laws may be protecting 100,000 people from being institutionalized" improperly, he said, "but you need only one person who does something violent like this, and everyone will get up in arms to change the laws again."

Violence among the mentally ill is uncommon, Elwork said, occurring in perhaps 1 or 2 percent of patients. Rogers pointed to several studies showing that former mental patients are no more prone to violence than any other members of society.

"What happened in this situation, I don't know, and it needs to be investigated," Rogers said of the mall shootings, but he added that existing laws should have prevented the tragedy.

Beyond the fear of more restrictive laws, Project SHARE members say they worry that finding housing and employment will become even more difficult for them than it already is. Several of them said they had recently decided to "go public" about their illnesses in the hope of educating the public.

The vast majority of people with mental illnesses, said Carmen Monk, are "putting their lives back together. They're not people to be feared."

Although they jokingly referred to gap-filled job resumes as "Swiss cheese resumes," group members said that explaining such lapses — marking hospitalizations — to prospective employers can be a serious problem. Perhaps the most basic problem the group faces is simply the stigma they and their families face from the label of "mental illness."

Mark Davis, 29, said he covered up his own illness — which eventually resulted in a suicide attempt after completion of graduate school — because he feared both the stigma and being "put away" in a mental hospital. Finally diagnosed as manic-depressive after his sixth hospitalization, Davis has been living independently for the last year. Davis and John Hood, Jr., recently spoke to a neighborhood group in North Philadelphia hoping to counter resistance to the establishment of a group home in the area. Before the meeting, the group adamantly opposed the home, Davis said, but afterward, half said they would not object.

Davis — whose wife of nine years, Susan, is also a group member — was a student at Valencia Community College near Orlando, Fla., when he first entered a hospital for depression.

"In the classroom, I might find myself feeling alienated, upset," he said. "It manifested itself in withdrawal. I'd end up staying at home, sleeping late."

He remembers the period as one of "quiet despair" during which he threatened suicide. Davis was hospitalized several times before a lawyer was able to have him released into a community-based halfway house, where he spent 1½ years. Several years ago, he again was hospitalized briefly, he said, but now considers himself a "survivor" — of both his illness and the system that treated him.

Now, Rogers worries that any progress made by Project SHARE, organized 15 months ago, will be overshadowed by tragedy.

"We've been working for 15 months," he said, "and then there's one incident. And that's what people remember."
Taking it to the streets

International Conference on Human Rights and Against Psychiatric Oppression, Vermont, 1985
Successful demonstration outside Philadelphia Housing Authority (1988) to protest proposed policies that would have discriminated against people with psychiatric histories.

Project SHARE (Self-Help and Advocacy Resource Exchange) was founded in 1984 by Joseph Rogers in Philadelphia.
A press release attracted all three TV network affiliates and the two major Philadelphia daily newspapers.

Street theater is an effective way to get your message out.
Promotion for movie protested
Ad for ‘Crazy People’ is called offensive

By Carolyn Acker
Inquirer Staff Writer

The ads for the movie are bad enough, they said. Big yellow signs on billboards and bus shelters that read, Warning: Crazy People Are Coming. Then, the weekly City Paper ran a promotion in Thursday’s edition, offering free tickets to a screening of the movie. In order to win, readers were asked to come to the newspaper office yesterday and “prove to us you’re crazy.”

“I brought my medication and said, ‘I’m crazy,’” recounted Laura Van Tosh, angrily shaking a bottle of pills drawn from her purse. “I got the last ticket, and I tore it up in his face.”

“I said, ‘I think what you’ve done is disgusting.’ And she said associate publisher Philip R. Anderson told her, ‘Thank you for sharing that with me.’

Van Tosh and eight other employees of Project SHARE, a self-help organization for the mentally ill, picketed the offices of the City Paper in the rain yesterday, demanding an apology for the promotional ad for Crazy People, which runs here next month.

Pennsylvania have asked Paramount Pictures to pull the advertising campaign. In a letter mailed yesterday, Robert J. Lerner, executive director of the Mental Health Association, called the campaign “terribly offensive” and hinted broadly at a boycott.

Outside the City Paper’s office, in the 200 block of South Ninth Street, protesters marched in the rain, carrying placards that read: “It could happen to you,” “The mentally ill should not be laughed at” and “End stigma.”

“Doesn’t mean anything,” said Anderson, who wrote the ad and addressed the group.

“Are you acting crazy?”

“Please,” said Van Tosh. “Don’t call us crazy.”

“I didn’t say, ‘Dance around . . . We did not ask anyone to act crazy,”

Although Anderson told the group he sympathized and agreed with their cause, he appeared to be talking about the movie—not his ad. He told them to put their complaints about the promotion in a letter to the paper.

The City Paper is an alternative-style newspaper, distributed free of charge. It claims a readership of 126,250. Yesterday, management took the unusual step of locking the front door: employees had “Crazy People” posters.

“No, we have nothing else,” said Schimmel, closing and locking the door. Later, upstairs, Schimmel asked Anderson whether the protesters wanted an apology.

“Maybe we ought to consider that,” Schimmel said. “Sometimes you do stupid things . . . without knowing.”

Then the publisher went downstairs and brought Van Tosh back to his office, where he also met with Richard R. Colby Jr., public affairs director of the Philadelphia Mental Health Care Corp. When the three emerged about a half-hour later, Van Tosh flashed a thumbs-up sign.

Schimmel announced the newspaper would print an apology for the ad. “This was part of a promotional campaign. We picked up the spirit of the campaign, and on reflection, that spirit was mean-spirited and wrong,” Schimmel said.

He said the paper would not run an ad when the movie opened, which would mean about $250 in lost revenues. And, he said, the paper would learn more about Project SHARE and run stories that present “alternative views” of mental illness.

As he spoke, Schimmel carefully continued, “Crazy People.”

(1990): Project SHARE’s protest against a local ad campaign – WARNING: Crazy People Are Coming – led to stories of recovery in the local media.
Crazy People’ film draws protesters

By Carolyn Acker
Inquirer Staff Writer

About two dozen mental health activists picketed an advance showing of the movie Crazy People last night, much to the indifference or consternation of most people entering the theater on Rittenhouse Square.

The activists were protesting the advertising campaign mounted by Paramount Pictures, which they say stigmatizes the mentally ill and wrongly portrays them as dangerous. Ads for the movie, stripped street billboards and bus shelters, read: "Warning: Crazy People are Coming."

The protesters outside the Eric Rittenhouse 3 theater included members of Project SHARE, a self-help organization for people with mental illness, representatives from agencies and advocacy organizations, and - for a few minutes - a member of the city council.

"As a defender of the First Amendment, it sickens me that people would use their right to free speech to hurt other people," said Councilman Angel L. Ortiz, who carried a sandwich that read, "Warning: Words Can Hurt."

A nationwide survey released in Washington yesterday revealed that two out of three Americans believe there is a great deal of stigma attached to mental illness.

The study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, found that 70 percent of Americans believe mental illness is increasing, but only one in three would welcome a mental health facility in his or her neighborhood.

"At the theater last night, most of those going in said they had no idea what the protest was about," said Richard Marcus. "This is probably all publicity for the movie."

One young couple, however, hesitated before entering. "If we're mentally ill, I'd be upset, too," said Norman Walker, 25, accompanied by Jane Schoonmaker, 25.

"I do want to see it," Walker said. "But it's kind of weird to walk past these people and ignore them."

Last Friday, Project SHARE demonstrated outside the offices of the weekly City Paper, protesting a promotional ad that offered free tickets to the screening to readers who "prove to us you're crazy." Editor and publisher Bruce Schimmel apologized for the ad.

Neither demonstration was directed at the movie itself, which opens here Wednesday.

The film features Dudley Moore as an ad executive who suffers a mental breakdown, begins to write truthful copy and gets sent to a mental institution, according to producer Tom Barad. The film has provoked complaints from the advertising world, as well.

Whatever the complaints have cost Paramount, they have also generated publicity for the movie. Paramount-owned Entertainment Tonight had a crew present to film last night's protest. The segment is scheduled to air TV tonight, one of the crew members said.

On Wednesday, the National Mental Health Association, in Alexandria, Va., called on Paramount to drop the advertising campaign and asked its 600-plus affiliates to join in the protest.

Barad, however, said it was too late to change the advertising. "I think it's a great campaign," he said in an interview Wednesday, "and I regret it has had this kind of problem."

Barad said he understood the complaints about stigma but disagreed with them. "My interpretation is it's an ironic play on words that talks about the craziness and the untruths that we tell each other in life and the business world," he said.

Paramount has also received complaints from mental health advocates in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., who objected to a billboard for the movie next to a state psychiatric hospital.

Some of the pickets protesting the showing of "Crazy People" outside the Eric Rittenhouse 3.
Dream Team (1989) National effort to recruit members and attract press coverage:

Clearinghouse sent flyers debunking mental illness myths and urged groups to hand out at theaters showing “Dream Team,” which had a “mental illness” theme. At least one group (in Worcester, Mass.) reported press coverage and recruitment as a result.
Don’t Just React: Act!

- Pie-in-the-Face and Pie-a-la-Mode Awards for negative and positive journalism, respectively. (The pies were handed to the recipients, not thrown!)
Sleep-out in front of PA State Office Building (1987) led to $4.5 million from the state for housing programs for homeless people with psychiatric disabilities.
Sit-in at Federal Office Building (Phila. 1988) focused public attention on $25 billion in cuts to low-income housing, which resulted in homelessness.
Rallies call attention to discrimination and prejudice.

Alternatives ‘90 rally in Pittsburgh to combat discrimination and prejudice, organized by the National Mental Health Consumers’ Self-Help Clearinghouse
Mental patients rally in search of a fair chance and fewer labels

By Steve Twedt
The Pittsburgh Press

Twenty-five years after being diagnosed as having paranoid schizophrenia, Nelson Hawthorne believes his biggest roadblock to a normal life is society's neglect.

Carrying a sign that read "Label me, ok, people," the 46-year-old Norristown, Montgomery County, resident and about 90 other current or former mental patients and friends rallied at Market Square yesterday to protest discrimination against people who have undergone psychiatric treatment.

"The mental health system produces an artificial dependence and we're not allowed to be productive citizens," he said.

Hawthorne lost his job five years ago and, while he still applies for work occasionally, one of the questions on the application is always, "Have you been hospitalized for psychiatric treatment?" They don't say anything, they can't really say anything. You just never get an interview.

Stacey Pope, 31, of Jacksonville, Fla., said she lost her retail sales job when she was hospitalized for five days. She was diagnosed as severely depressed three years ago, but doctors now think she is schizophrenic.

"When you're going through it, you just feel hopeless," she said.

The rally was part of Alternatives '90, a five-day national conference concluding today at Duquesne University. It was organized by people who have had psychiatric problems. About 1,000 people attended.

Erin Newland, front, of Connecticut, and John Fijalek of Maine took part in mental health rally.

The group hopes to fight the stigma of mental illness, to improve the quality of life for the mentally ill and to develop alternatives to the mental health system.

Madeleine Niseli, 39, a rape counselor from Big Spring, Texas, who has been both a patient and a staff development coordinator at a state hospital, said, "Society needs to see the mentally ill not as weirdos, not as freaks, but as people with needs, like someone who has heart problems or kidney problems. It's just affecting us in a different area."

During the past 13 years, she has witnessed hospital aides who "have no perception of what a schizophrenic is, or what a psychotic is, or how to communicate with that person. So they have to resort to the physical." At the same time, she added, mental patients have their own responsibility for removing the stigma they face by not using their illness to manipulate others or to shrink difficult tasks.

Mental health professionals and mental health patients, or consumers, have to meet halfway, she said.

"The professionals want complete control and the consumers want complete control. There's got to be some compromise."

Yesterday was designated Nation at Mental Patients Rights Day and the conference theme, "Together, Tearing Down the Walls," was designed with yesterday's celebration of Bastille Day in mind. Bastille Day is the French holiday marking the anniversary of the 1789 freeing of prisoners - some of whom were mentally ill - from the Bastille prison.
“Loony Bin Rally”

- Lemonade from lemons: MHASP Rally for supported housing (2008) – Wire service called it “loony bin rally,” which resulted in an apology and lots of publicity.

MHASP Rally for Supported Housing, Philadelphia, 2008

See article in Behavioral Healthcare about the rally at link below.

http://www.behavioral.net/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=&nm=&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=64D490AC6A7D4FE1AEB453627F1A4A32&tier=4&id=75F935BFAF764678AA0C135BD5E44683
Press Releases

- Announce breaking news
- Are written like a newspaper article
- Ideally, are followed by a phone call
Anatomy of a press release

- Like a short news article (under 400 words)
- Printed on letterhead
- Identified as a press release
- Should include:

  * Release information (For immediate release or Embargoed)
  * Headline
  * Dateline
  * Five “W’s” in lead paragraph

  * Some background
  * Quotes from key people
  * Boilerplate
  * Contact information
  * End with # # # or – END– or -30-
Send the press release . . .

- **To:**
  - Appropriate person
  - Follow up with phone calls.

- **When:**
  - Daily newspapers, radio and TV: Roughly 24 hours in advance
  - Weeklies: Find out their deadlines.
  - We now live in a 24/7 media world.
Storm damage in South Dakota, published 6/28/10

TV often airs photos sent by viewers
When a reporter calls you:

- If possible, call the reporter back.
  - Ask deadline.
  - Find out their questions if you can.
- If you don’t know something:
  - Say you’ll find out and get back to them -- and do it; or
  - Refer them to someone else.
Interview tips:

- Don’t make “off the record” comments.
- Headlining: state conclusions first, then follow with details.
- Make your point in 15 seconds or less.
- Avoid jargon.
- Illustrate facts with stories.
Interview tips: (continued)

- Identify your most important point(s) for the reporter.
- Don’t let reporters put words in your mouth.
- Positive visibility: Put your best foot forward.
**Blocking** means redirecting an unwelcome or unproductive question.

**Bridging** means transitioning to an area that fits your agenda.
Examples:

- **Blocking:** “That’s an interesting question …”
- **Bridging:** “… but I think it’s important to note that …”
- **Blocking:** “That speaks to a larger point …”
- **Bridging:** “… which is that [whatever your point is].”
TV editorials

- Similar to op-eds, but much shorter
- Follow station guidelines
- Write, then read aloud, slowly!
Public Service Announcements

- Called PSAs
- **Five W’s (Who, What, When, Where, Why)**
- **Length varies:**
  - 15 seconds
  - 30 seconds
  - 60 seconds
Facebook and Other Social Media

More than 70 percent of journalists use social networks to assist in reporting:
According to the Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank, Twitter can help you promote your cause.

A different opinion: “Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted”
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell
Anyone can:

- Participate in a media watch campaign
  - NAMI Stigmabusters ([http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Fight_Stigma](http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Fight_Stigma))
- Write letters of praise or complaint
- Join a Mental Health Players troupe
- Perform community service
- Take Action ([http://www.openmindsopendoors.com/action.htm](http://www.openmindsopendoors.com/action.htm))
Suggested Resources (1)

 “How to Cope with the Media”
   http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/communications/press/training/

 “Dealing with the Media”
   http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/media/index.html

 “Tips on Dealing with the Media”
   http://www.civilrights.org/census/media/media-tips.html
Suggested Resources (2)

- “Working with the Media,” National Consumer Supporter Technical Assistance Center of NMHA
  http://www.ncstac.org/content/materials/WorkingWiththeMedia.pdf

- APHA Media Advocacy Manual,
  http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/A5A9C4ED-1C0C-4D0C-A56C-C33DEC7F5A49/0/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf
Suggested Resources (3)

- “Doing Better Media Interviews: Quick Tips”
  http://www.ccmc.org/node/16212

- “Op Eds and Letters to the Editor: Tips”
  http://www.ccmc.org/node/16170

  http://www.internet-resources.com/stash/harper.htm
Suggested Resources (4)

- Facebook for Public Relations/Journalistics

- The DigiActive Guide to Twitter for activism
  [http://www.slideshare.net/DigiActive/digiactive-guide-introduction-twitter-for-activism](http://www.slideshare.net/DigiActive/digiactive-guide-introduction-twitter-for-activism)
Suggested Resources (5)

“Media portrayal of mental illness and its treatments: what effect does it have on people with mental illness?”
“I am only one. But still I am one. I cannot do everything. But still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

- Helen Keller (1880-1968)