

Mental Health Affects Us All

I have a friend whom I met when he came by and asked to wash my windows at my work. They didn't need cleaned but I wanted to help. He continued to come by, and I continued to get my windows cleaned.

Our relationship continued to grow, and I learned to trust him and he me. He became more open about his situation, what his background was like, his experiences, etc. I admit I was curious and as our trust grew, he began to share more with me.

I learned he had been homeless since October. Through a hospital stay and a burglary he had lost his housing and possessions and ended up on the street. He sleeps in abandoned buildings at night. He does odd jobs during the day. He is not lazy. He is one of the humblest guys I have ever met. He had his own business and worked in IT and web design. He is a highly intelligent person and very well spoken. There's a very different person inside than what's many see on the outside.

He understands his mental health issues and is able to talk about them. Mental health it's never simple.

There are others like him on the street. Not all are addicts. Many times, from our perspective, we simplify solutions. It's never simple. It's never easy. We all have demons to slay.



"If you don't make time for your wellness, you will be forced to make time for your illness"

Mental Health and Personal Defense

Mental health and physical health have similar characteristics. We are all made different physically and we are all made different mentally and emotionally as well. Everyone has different levels of physical health and fitness...and can coexist in ways that it doesn't impact each other in negative ways.

Just like the body, the mind is made up of complicated systems. Maybe more so because these systems aren't as objectively observable as the physical systems. Most of the time we are able to coexist in society without impacting ourselves and others. It only becomes a concern for others when the behavior of some forces a change in our behavior.

Consider an event that happened on August 12 in Horn Lake, Mississippi. Police received a call from a hospital about a man stabbed in the chest with a pair of scissors. The victim said his friend stabbed him after they got into an argument at a barbershop. That friend now faces aggravated assault charges.

We all react with emotionally to things sometimes but was it rational for one man

to settle a verbal dispute by driving scissors into another man's chest? It's reasonable to conclude that the aggressor's emotional state overrode his rational state.

When mental health turns anti-social, it doesn't always cross into criminal behavior. But when it does, it becomes everyone's problem. The environment shifts. Safety erodes and we may have to change our behavior.

The societal norms that once restrained people's behavior no longer seem to generally be held. Any behavior becomes possible at any time. If we have any sense of personal safety, then that forces us a change in our behavior.

This is where personal defense intersects with mental health. Our training isn't just physical - it's a response to the unpredictable state of the world around us. It demands that we become less vulnerable to outside behaviors. We train to avoid, to de-escalate, to manage conflicts. But there are moments when those options disappear, and force must meet force. Our goal is to avoid those moments but be ready when we can't.

