"I Did Not Tell it to Anyone": Please Pay Attention to the Children of Patients Suffering From Psychosis

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Introduction

I have been suffering from psychoses and mania in several periods of times during the last 10 years. This led to a divorce between my husband and me, when our son was 3 years old. He is now 12 years old. He is living several days of the week with his father and father’s partner and her two children, and several days of the week with me.

Recently, I discovered that I had suffered from another psychosis. I had developed the idea that I would marry Christ during my first communion on Maundy Thursday and that it would be the start toward world peace. I asked my then 11-year-old son if he knew that I had been ill. He confirmed that. When I asked him if he had talked about it with anyone, he said: “I did not tell it to anyone.” As a mother, that hurt my soul. I imagined him being at home with a confused mother who was ill and that he was not able to talk about it with anyone.

In this article, I stress the need for psychiatrists to pay attention to the children of patients who suffer from psychoses, and to stress the need to parents to be open about mental illness with their children. The children need to know that they may say it when they notice that a parent is sick; this does not imply that they are being not loyal to their parent. On the contrary, it can contribute to a faster recovery of the sick parent.

I hope that I can help children who have a parent suffering from psychosis, psychiatrists and nurses by sharing the experiences of my son and me.

How My Communion Would Be the Start of World Peace: “Mum, You Are Sick”

I did not believe in God until I was 34 years old. I first met Christ in my third psychosis in 2009. Over the years, I gradually developed the idea that my mental illness was not only a mental illness but that it was a spiritual journey as well. I followed the holy masses and I had several talks with the vicar of the Vitus Church in Hilversum, the church close to my psychiatric hospital. Therefore, I would do my first communion at the age of 45 years.

My first communion would be on Maundy Thursday 2017, the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. I had just returned from a peace visit in Israel. I had participated in public peace negotiation talks in Tel Aviv between Israeli and people from the Palestinian territories. I had also visited the nativity church of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem with a peace activist from Bethlehem and I had visited the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem where Jesus had carried his cross. I mentioned to the vicar that I saw my first communion as a wedding with Christ, although Maundy Thursday is also a sad event because it is Jesus’ Last Supper.

Gradually, I developed the idea that I would really marry Christ. I also talk to him via telepathy. When I drink water or eat food, I “hear” his voice. He is very supportive like he is a real husband. He urges me to be kind to people and he is saying that he loves me. Recently I attend a holy mass in the Vitus Church. Just before the congregation, a man entered the church. He seemed a bit confused, he made a lot of noise, and he carried a large bouquet of flowers and a heart saying “I love you.” Two men asked him to go away because he disturbed the mass. After the mass, a lady gave me the wonderdeeds medal, because she thought it was brave what I did. The medal means that Mother Mary protects me. I was a bit puzzled by all of this. I had the feeling that Christ indirectly gave me the flowers.

I often went outside standing with my bare feet on the ground in front of my front door, spread my arms, and said: “I love you Christ, I am sending you love.” Or I said something like: “For those who cannot come to my first...
communion, I want to let you know that I think about you. I send your peace and love. There will be peace and love in the whole universe soon.”

During this period, I mentioned to my son that I turn off the Wi-Fi during the nights, because I am sensitive to radiation. My son looked at me and said: “Mum, you are sick.” I answered that in Germany, an advisory council advises to keep Wi-Fi radiation low. It did not come into my mind that my son may meant that I suffered from another psychosis again.

How I Got Out of My Psychosis: The Remission

My sister had urged me earlier on to talk with the husband of my mother about my idea that I feel that he works for the Dutch intelligence service. When my mother and her husband came for a visit, I thought that it would matter to her husband what kind of colors my clothes were. The color “red” means safety. Because it was too hot to wear my red waistcoat, I left it on a chair. I hoped that he would feel comfortable by seeing the color red. I also mentioned that I wanted to “hear the real story.” I was convinced that the husband of my mother would admit that he had tried to kill me in 2009 because he worked for the Dutch intelligence service. I had in mind that when he confessed, I would forgive him and world peace would be achieved. However, gradually it occurred to me that the husband of my mother would not confess and would not announce that world peace would come. This was probably because I had taken rest and because when seeing him, I started to realize that my brain was being naughty again.

I mentioned to the husband of my mother later that day that I had also had the feeling that morning that I was responsible for the accident that happened close to my home and for which a trauma helicopter, two ambulances, and a police car came. He said: “We are walking on the heath now. It is quite. I do not see any ambulances or trauma helicopter. So you are not the reason. What do you think of it?”

The Actions We Took

As I pointed out in the “Introduction” section, I immediately called my son after I came out of my psychosis. I felt so sad that he had noticed that I was ill again and that he did not tell anyone about it. I e-mailed his father, his father’s partner, and my sister to explain what had happened and that I think that is very important that our son can talk openly about it when he notices that his mother is sick. Luckily they are all very encouraging. His father talked about it with our son the other day. When my son visited me, I talked about it with him. Luckily he mentioned that he had only noticed that I was a bit ill. He said that he would mention it to his father when he notices that I am ill again.

I also had to tell my son and apologize that I had thrown away the soap he had given to me as a holiday souvenir. It had turned brown and I was convinced in my psychosis that I would get visitors and that I needed to clean the house. However, I had never thrown away something from my son before without discussing it, except for a toy gun. So he was very sad about it. I discussed that this is what my stupid illness does, it makes me do things which I do not do when I am healthy. However, I had also scaled-up my medication, so hopefully I would not become ill soon again.

Conclusion

I suggest to psychiatrists and nurses to mention to parents who are divorced that they should encourage their children to talk about it when they notice that their parent is ill, that does not mean that they are not loyal to their parent who is ill. On the contrary, the sooner the healthy parent knows that something is wrong with the ill parent, the quicker the healthy parent can help. In addition, I suggest that the healthy parent mentions to the children that the “ill” partner also loves the children very much, but that she/he has just a vulnerability which can make her/him behave differently. The healthy parent should actively ask their children every now and then about the (mental) situation of the parent who is sensitive to psychoses, without being too judgmental or too interrogative.

In other words, openness about mental illness—also to children—is very important.

Acknowledgments

This article is dedicated to my son and all the other children with a parent who suffers from a vulnerability for psychoses.