



KANE COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL

making a difference ...together

Message of the Month

March 2010

www.kanecountymentalhealth.org

Kane County Mental Health Council

- The Association for Individual Development
630-966-4000
- Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center
630-859-6562
- Delnor Community Hospital
630-208-3000
- Ecker Center for Mental Health Services
847-695-0484
- Family Counseling Service of Aurora
630-844-2662
- Family Service Association of Greater Elgin Area
847-695-3680
- Gateway Foundation/Aurora
630-966-7400
- Greater Elgin Family Care Center
847-608-1344
- Kane County Health Department
630-208-3801
- Larkin Center
847-695-5656
- League of Women Voters
630-365-2138
- Mental Health & Mental Retardation Services, Inc.
630-892-5456
- National Alliance on Mental Illness, DeKalb, Kane-South, Kendall Counties, Inc.
630-896-6264
- National Alliance on Mental Illness-Kane County
847-931-4715
- Provena Mercy Medical Center
630-801-2657
- Provena St. Joseph Hospital
847-931-5521
- Senior Services Association
847-741-0404
- Suicide Prevention Services
630-482-9696
- TriCity Family Services
630-232-1070
- Visiting Nurse Association of Fox Valley
630-978-9835

Mental illness can be hereditary

There was a time when people believed that mental illness came from a variety of causes including bad parenting, demon possession, and weakness of character. Over the years researchers have arrived at different conclusions...that mental illness does not have a single cause but is a combination of several factors including environment, stressors, and heredity.

That mental illness can run in families is a fact that has been observed through the ages. There is strong evidence that people with some forms of mental illness such as Bi-polar disorder or Schizophrenia have what is called a "genetic predisposition" toward developing a mental illness. The thought is that people inherit a weakness on one of their genes that, under certain circumstances or stressors, may trigger the development of a mental illness. This accounts for why only one twin in an identical pair may develop a mental illness and the other may not. While they are genetically identical, their life experiences, environments, and stressors will be different.

What does this mean for someone with mental illness in their family history? It is actually a message of hope. While we cannot control everything that happens in our lives, the management of stress may actually assist in the prevention of the development of a mental illness. Stressors can include not only the obvious; such as the management of one's time and work load, but also what a person puts into his or her body. A healthy diet with frequent exercise can go a long way in helping with stress management. A person who consumes too much alcohol or partakes of illegal drugs could stress the body's delicate balance.

While much more research remains to be done on the influence of heredity on our mental health, we can give ourselves the best opportunity for a healthy mind by taking care of ourselves now. Take a moment to look over your life; what stressors can you eliminate or reduce? What can you do today to make your mental health a little better?

Info Box:

If you are having trouble coping with the stressors in your life, there is help available. In the Northern Kane County call 847-697-2380. In Southern Kane County call: 630-966-9393

These Crisis Lines provide assistance to persons with a wide variety of needs and concerns, including loneliness, depression, anxiety, or substance abuse. Callers receive support, direction and referrals to community services.