



The Ultimate Lottery

Most of the time mental illness is seen as a disability. It is expected that people who are living with schizophrenia for example, will not achieve as much in their lives as those living without the illness.

These expectations may in turn be passed down to the people themselves who are experiencing such conditions firsthand.

Depending on its time of onset and its severity, mental health problems can do much to sabotage your life.

It can be hard to look at the lives of others who do not have to carry such a burden, and wonder what you might have achieved in their situation.

People you went to school with may, in later years, get high-paying jobs, raise families, and live what seem from your perspective to be “perfect” lives.

In such a climate it can be tempting not to even try. Mental illness may seem like a millstone hanging around your neck, sometimes making it a struggle to cope let alone thrive.

Most people can relate to physical ailments, but those of the mind are still often mysterious and disturbing.

How can you adequately describe to someone how it feels to have a mental illness? How

can you articulate to psychiatrists and doctors what you're experiencing, when unlike the anatomy of your body, your mind is as individual as your fingerprint?

Your condition is documented and written down in a manual used by psychiatrists. But your own unique identity is something indefinable; you won't find it in any book.

Not only is it a struggle to make others understand, it's a struggle to understand yourself exactly what you're experiencing and why.

The chances of being born the person that you are in the first place were so remote that it was almost impossible. There will never be anyone else on the face of this planet who is exactly like you.

You have already won the ultimate lottery just by existing. Congratulations. Whether you thank genetics and evolution or God, it's still a miracle that you're here.

The odds of having a mental illness at some time during this existence are more similar to those of a coin toss—about 50%

Mental illness—and perhaps more importantly other peoples' attitude towards it—can represent a real hurdle on the path to living a full and satisfying life.

Because of your condition, you may need income support, so

you may be on a benefit. To the welfare system, you may just be a number classified as an invalid.

Depressing, going from being a miracle to ultimately being just a faceless individual; written off as being an invalid? Yes. But it's important to remember that you're more than just an invalid, a number, or a condition.

So often we spend so much time looking at our limitations, that we lose sight of the strengths we possess. We dwell on what might have been, rather than what can be. Looking back doesn't fix anything.

If anything, we should look back to see just how far we have come.

Recovery from mental illness is itself a journey. Sometimes we forget how much willpower and goal setting it took to get to a position of wellness.

With this in mind, it puts the other challenges we face in perspective. It is important not to lose sight of this fact, and not to lose sight of hope.

If you try to do something in life, there is a chance that you won't succeed; if you don't try, failure is guaranteed. Having an illness may mean we have to try harder, but it's no reason not to try at all.

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