

Psychiatric Survivors Movement

Authored by
mohammad looti

November 19, 2022

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2022). *Psychiatric Survivors Movement*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES.
Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=39273>

The Psychiatric survivors movement is a loose coalition of people who, united by the resentment that they have been harmed or betrayed by psychiatry, advocate in favor of mental health treatment alternatives, or just the right to freedom from the system, for those diagnosed with (or simply accused of being afflicted by) mental illnesses. The wider movement is also known as the Consumer/Survivor/Ex-Patient Movement.

Human rights

According to members of the Psychiatric Survivors movement, coerced and/or forced psychiatric interventions are a violation of a person's basic human rights; including the right to autonomy, the freedom to make one's own choices, the right to liberty and security of the person, the right to physical and mental integrity, freedom from torture, the right to health care on the basis of free and informed consent, etc. Many people who have experienced forced institutionalization, forced drugging and forced electroshock respond with outrage because they consider there to be a prejudice within society that ignores their human rights and over-rates the judgment of psychiatrists, pharmaceutical companies, the police, and the legal oversight of the mental health system. According to the movement, many also view such interventions made in the name of help to be coercive and inherently violent in nature.

Origins

The psychiatric survivors movement grew out of these experiences, though there are perhaps earlier inspirations for the movement (e.g., anti-psychiatry and the opposition of surrealism to psychiatry). According to the movement, other influences include the civil rights movement.

History of movement

The beginning of a formal movement is often attributed to Dorothy Weiner, a union organizer, Tom Wittick, a political activist/organizer and Howard Geld, or Howie the Harp, a homeless advocate, and the formation of the Insane Liberation Front in Portland, Oregon, in 1969. Many other local initiatives followed, many of them with Howie's direct participation, and most owing to his articulation of peer alternatives to traditional treatment methods, and demonstrated success in funding and operating peer-operated service centers. A coalition of such programs meets annually at the Alternatives conference.

MindFreedom International and the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry have also played important roles in the psychiatric survivors movement.

Aims

People with mental illnesses often "suffer from widespread systemic discrimination and are consistently denied the rights and services to which they are entitled". One of the goals of the psychiatric survivors movement is to have mental illnesses protected by Anti-discrimination laws, thus affording them the same legal protection as those of varying sex, age, race, religion etc. Additionally, it is well recognised that those with mental disorders have generally higher rates of unemployment, and lower occupational attainment. Proponents of affirmative action believe that, as with other minority groups, there should be equal representation of those with mental illnesses in all occupations, even though mental illnesses can negatively affect job performance.

Legal issues

A January 4, 2007 restraining order issued by U.S. District Court Judge Jack B. Weinstein forbade a large number of activists in the psychiatric survivors movement from posting links on their websites to ostensibly leaked documents which purportedly show that Eli Lilly and Company intentionally withheld information as to the lethal side-effects of Zyprexa. The Electronic Frontier Foundation appealed this as prior restraint on the right to link to and post documents, saying that citizen-journalists should have the same First Amendment rights as major media outlets. It was later held that the judgement was unenforcable, though First Amendment claims were rejected.