



How to Help A Schizophrenic

e-book

by
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Introduction

Welcome to the pages of this e-book on How to help a schizophrenic. I am not a psychiatrist, therapist or coach. The only credentials I have for offering you advice is that I have myself undergone a deep schizophrenic experience for eight years. I know the dimensions of this deeply disturbing, and sometimes inspiring, momentous labor of the psyche.

The three chapters of this book have been written in order to give family members, spouses and friends a closer look at how to help a schizophrenic emotionally. The advice given in this book does not replace help from a loving professional, therapist or doctor. I would also like to urge anyone reading these pages afflicted with schizophrenia to not stop taking their medication or stopping the treatment they are undergoing on account of this book.

This book can help to lead to first steps in helping someone suffering from psychosis. It can be the beginning of a loving and nurturing healing process, of which the psychosis is already a part.

I see schizophrenia as part of a strong individuation process which is part of the psychic and soul self-growth of an individual. This process needs to be respected. At the same time people undergoing schizophrenia often need help from family, spouses or friends. This is where this book sets in on doing its part. Hopefully it will become a friend in guiding you on your journey of helping a schizophrenic finding respect for their experiences, help and love.

Sincerely

Yvonne Nahat

Chapter One

How to understand the interior life of a schizophrenic

Schizophrenics are highly imaginative people. During their psychosis they reinvent the world and the cosmos. They hear voices; have hallucinations, visions and what is referred to as delusions. Above all schizophrenia is a tremendous creative process a labor of the psyche and the soul.

Schizophrenia is usually looked at from the outside. Non-psychotics as well as traditional medicine do little in the way of understanding the schizophrenic. Usually he or she is left alone with the tremendous imagery lived during this experience.

This, however, does not have to be the case. A loving understanding of the psychic content of a schizophrenic episode is accessible to everyone just as is the interpretation of dreams. Perhaps if we look behind the foil of schizophrenia, then we can begin to uncover the richness of the experience and understand it for what it is a deep individuation process.

John Weir Perry, a psychologist, founder of Diabase and writer, has found out what is called a spiritual awakening during a first time episode which has been observed to last for about 40 days. Remember Jesus' journey to the desert which lasted about 40 days. After this period, patients at his in-patient house Diabase, usually grew out of their psychosis and emerged, without medication, as strengthened individuals. This only to point, that a psychosis is above all a psychic experience before it is an illness.

Schizophrenics work with strong archetypes during their psychosis. More often than not battles of cosmic proportions take place. The psychotic is transformed into a hero, having to undergo trials and tribulations through a threatening force. Often these forces have cataclysmic proportions and are couched in everyday figures and terminology. The hero might be the psychotic in persona, having been transformed to king or queen-like

dimensions. The threatening force might take on the figure of the CIA, a cybercracker gang or a vigilante group like the Illuminati. The figure of the hero becomes a form of ego death and rebirth of expanded dimensions. The good of the world might depend on the hero. The freedom of all enlightened individuals and so on. There might be a cultural death that a whole group is threatened with before the rebirth occurs. Other archetypes might come into play such as the trickster or the shadow. The shadow is all that is repressed and undesirable in our persona. It is usually something, not only, the schizophrenic is afraid of. In the course of the psychosis he or she learns to integrate the shadow and to transform it into something else. Along the lines of Nietzsche who says: "My sickness is my great health". The schizophrenic hero has super-worldly powers in order to overcome obstacles, trials and tribulations.

Schizophrenics often find expanded forms of communication. Similarly to in "A Beautiful Mind" where Nash finds all sorts of secret codes in articles and finds a remote drop off mailbox to transfer his secret messages. Sometimes these expanded forms of communication become new languages, such as music turning into language. Or thoughts being transmitted telepathically. This phenomenon, as well as the work with the archetypes, points at the strong creative aspect within schizophrenia. Not only is the individual and society refashioned, but so too is its language. Camille Claudel wrote her secret language diaries as a further example.

Schizophrenics reinvent love. Often a psychotic experience refashions agape or universal love as well as love relationships with imaginary lovers or friends. A hierogamus is not an uncommon occurrence with psychotics. In this wedding made literally in the heavens, the experience of love reaches new unseen for dimensions. Perhaps the love dimension of the person has been suffering in the so called saner moments of life and love is relived on new terms. The same goes for the reinvention of universal love. Schizophrenics often invent new forms of societal organization based on love and trust. A new form of paradise emerges and the existing forms of organization are hard pressed to meet with the psychotic's approval. This is, among many other reasons, the ground on which the psychotic's dislike for mental institutions is founded. Sensing very aptly that the cold clinical environment, where generally

medication is administered without much regard for the psychic content of schizophrenia, is not a model of loving organization.

Schizophrenics endure almost insurmountable structures of pain. Many who have voices in their heads,- imagine having a voice inside your head, your skull hurts literally from this onslaught of voices,- endure a most painful debasement of their persona and psyche. The voices are often nasty, calling them names, talking dirty, of sadistic, racist and sexist content. In a mild psychosis these voices might be barely audible. It might seem to him or her having the voices that he or she is thinking out loud. Nevertheless these voices can be very excruciating because they are so debasing.

Visual hallucination is often a part of a psychotic experience. Similarly to how John Nash in "A Beautiful Mind" had news morsels "jump out" at him from newspapers, so visual occurrences can be completely altered by schizophrenia. A group of people walking in the streets can suddenly seem like a marching army pursuing one. The air suddenly looks thick and heavy making it difficult for the psychotic to breath. Light and color apparitions are not infrequent. The third eye sometimes seems ablaze producing all kinds of wondrous and sometimes frightening images.

This has been a brief excursion into understanding the interior workings of a schizophrenic. Each psychosis is different and lived on individual terms. Hence it is difficult to make a case scenario that would touch upon all the possibilities of all psychosis. Certain is that the interior invisible content of a psychosis is in fact a rich visual and auditory world filled with meaning and signification. Anyone confronted with schizophrenia, either themselves, or via a friend or family member does well in entering this world with an open mind and heart in order to gain glimpses of understanding of this profound psychic movement unfolding. Only by taking the interior life of schizophrenia seriously can we begin to understand its role in the process of personal growth and individuation. Only with understanding can this experience be transformed and integrated as the healing process which it undoubtedly also is.

Chapter Two

How to get a schizophrenic to the doctor

Getting a schizophrenic to the doctor is no easy matter. And it should not be. Questions of personal liberty and psychic welfare are to be considered.

I have been a schizophrenic for eight years and I lived in what traditional medicine terms denial. I refused help from family members and friends over the years. I refused to see doctors, although I have been in and out of mental institutions six times. Doctors however, have also committed the classic mistakes that can be made with a schizophrenic. The cold methods of traditional medicine should be considered skeptically when wanting to help a schizophrenic. I remember screaming at my doctors in one of the clinics that I was not "ill" but "mad" quoting Nietzsche that my "sickness" is "my great health". Intuitively I must have known that a psychosis is not just an illness parse but also itself a part of a massive healing process of the psyche and soul.

More often than not a schizophrenic will not go to a doctor of his or her own accord. Usually family or friends are the ones who manage to get the person undergoing a psychosis to get medical help. The burden frequently rests on the ones closest to the psychotic. They are the only ones willing to put up with all the hurt, pain and trouble a schizophrenic puts his or her family and friends through.

How do we help someone undergoing a deep schizophrenic experience? Experience will tell us that most psychotics live in a world unto themselves with a blind eye and ear towards the ones trying to help them. In most cases the psychotic is not aware that he or she is ill and that is certainly not all there is to the story.

Schizophrenia is a multidimensional world full of horrors and imagination. To the psychotic a new world has opened up. They are undergoing a deep labor of the psyche. We would do a schizophrenic wrong in just

labeling them as ill. For that the visionary power of the experience is too much filled with myth and symbolism which is understandable to anybody taking the time and effort to understand what exactly is going on. A psychosis is an in depth individuation process where the person is undergoing most likely an extreme form of ego death and renewal. All these aspects of a psychosis need to be paid heed to when approaching a psychotic. In my psychosis I conjured up an entirely dualistic world picture. Evil forces were threatening to take over the world. I was part of a world wide body of people fending off these forces.

Schizophrenia is a deep world unto itself. The person undergoing a psychosis is imbedded probably in hearing voices, whether this person is conscious of it or not, hallucinations, delusions and visions. This inner life creates a world which is completely separate from the world non-psychotics live in. Reality for the psychotic has been changed and transformed.

Very often schizophrenics hear and see conflicting things; the good and the bad; damning voices for example, as well as beautiful hallucinations, colors and sounds. Frequently schizophrenics create a story within their own psyche and mind. They have people, imaginary or real-imaginary ones, with who they are in a dialogue. Often a schizophrenic will conjure up an internal dialogue where persecution, enemies and friends populate the psyche, as is shown in the film "A Beautiful Mind".

For these reasons it is very difficult for an outsider, even if this maybe family or friends, to enter the field of consciousness of a psychotic. Often the ones trying to contact the schizophrenic, family members and friends, have been implicated in a hallucination the schizophrenic is undergoing: They are either part of a group that is trying to harm them or trying to help them and so forth. During my psychosis I had voices in my head from family and friends. In my mind they were mostly, not all, implicated in cannibalism. This caused me much confusion and the utmost form of pain.

A family member or friend trying to get through to a schizophrenic needs to be prepared for an in depth journey into the psyche of another person. Trying to access the schizophrenic from outside of his or her mind set will not work. **The basis of any relationship is**

trust and love. So too it is with a schizophrenic. You need to gain the trust and love of the person undergoing a schizophrenic experience.

How can you do this? By offering trust and love yourself. Be there for the psychotic, no matter how trying they might be. Take them not just as an ill person, but as someone undergoing a deep labor of the psyche with a need to communicate this state with a loved one. Take the person for real.

Try and understand the mental and psychic world the person is living in. Try and find out the story the person is living through. What is the story of the hallucination, the vision, the delusion? Who are the characters involved? Who in the mind of the schizophrenic is trying to harm or help them? See the psyche of the schizophrenic as a puzzle you need to put together. It has a rhyme and a reason to the schizophrenic. Enter his or her world of reasoning.

Unfortunately when I was going through my psychosis nobody reacted this way. Family members, friends and people from the health services all came knocking at my door, telling me: "Yvonne, you are sick, you need help and medication". I however was battling inner demons of a higher order. I had conjured up a dualistic world picture with friends and foes. Half of my family was implicated in a scheme to sell my body parts in my mind. I had been hijacked by a group that could do black magic on me via cyberspace. It seemed to me that nobody could help me, least of all the family members and friends whose voices I was hearing in my head. Had somebody bothered to find out what the nature of my hallucinations were, had somebody bothered listening to my story, then perhaps I would have opened up to the people surrounding me trying to help. Instead people were telling me that I was sick and I was convinced that I was as healthy as ever. After all, did not my new consciousness prove that I was healthy? I could communicate telepathically. I could read people's minds; hear their voices without them speaking to me in traditional terms and so on.

So, gaining the trust of the person undergoing a psychosis is of the utmost importance. As I have already pointed out, learning the in depth nature of the visions and hallucinations and delusions of the schizophrenic is indispensable in gaining this bond. This trust becomes

the basis of a relationship. It will take time. Learn about the characters trying to good or harm. Find out who they are their names and their intent. Do this without judging just allow yourself to enter the story. **Participate in the story.** Say that you will help fend of the threats, help along with the friends. Be loving and warm. Accept the person in front of you as someone undergoing a real psychic experience and labor like in dream work.

Gaining the trust of a psychotic might be no easy task. Often psychotics can be very harsh, they push away the ones they love, and they stop trusting relatives and friends. If you are trying to get in touch emotionally with a schizophrenic be prepared to take a lot of blows. As long as you don't understand the world view he or she is purporting, you will be fighting a lost battle. During my psychosis I wrote hate letters to my mother, sister and husband, accusing them of horrible things. Instead of responding that no, neither were they cheating on me, or trying to sell my body parts or holding me hostage with a cybercracker war gang, they said: " You are sick" and there I had my proof. Why were they not denying my accusations? My family was so shocked at the accusations; they did not know how to respond, other than being hurt. But that was exactly the wrong way to respond to a schizophrenic. They should have reassured me, that they want no harm.

If you want to convince the person going through a psychosis to see a doctor, don't say: "You have to see a doctor". But try it another way. Perhaps you can say that you want to see a friend who can help with getting rid of the enemy figures for example. Try and find a psychiatrist who is loving and warm, someone who will also enter the story of the individual and not someone who will just diagnose "mental illness" and prescribe some pills. If you want to try to get a psychotic to take medication, also try and do this in a loving manner and from within the story the schizophrenic is living through. Don't say: "you are sick and need medication", but try and explain that this medication will strengthen one in warding off pain, evil or whatever the trauma is the person is undergoing. Most schizophrenics are very sensitive people and they respond like seismographs to the feelings with which they are presented.

Be sure that you have found a doctor who will talk with the schizophrenic and won't just do his or her diagnose

and then follow up with a prescription. This won't be an easy task because it is an unspoken rule within traditional medicine to not enter the mind set of a psychotic, since it is all considered "crazy" anyway. Try and find a Jungian therapist near you or another therapist or doctor who accepts the schizophrenic as a full fledged person in his or her own rite.

Dealing with schizophrenia is a labor of love for the schizophrenic as well as for family members and friends. Often the person undergoing the psychosis will have visions of love and will be very sensitive towards anything that has to do with emotions, even if this might not seem so to an outside observer. Psychotics often reinvent universal love and with a caring partner they can exteriorize this movement of the psyche. A loving understanding and in depth participation on the part of the one who wants to help is often the first step in aiding a schizophrenic in his or her first steps towards betterment.

Chapter Three

How to love a schizophrenic

Loving a schizophrenic is almost an impossible task. The person is usually unstable, sometimes aggressive, often abusive and very hurtful. While I was going through my psychosis I alienated my husband, family and friends. By the end of my psychosis only a handful of people were still left who were even willing to know me, let alone love me. As a matter of fact, except for my mother, everybody else had given up on me: sisters, father, husband and most friends. It has taken time and effort to rebuild broken relations and friendships after my recovery.

This essay then, is to encourage all those confronted with a schizophrenic family member or partner to not give up hope and love even if it seems impossible.

A schizophrenic is undergoing extreme labors of the psyche. Voices, hallucinations, visions and so called delusions are what they are going through. They have severed all ties with exterior reality and are living in a completely interior world. As a family member, spouse or friend, try to find out what exactly these visions, hallucinations, delusions and voices are made up of. Dare to enter the mind set of the schizophrenic. Soon you will realize that there are real stories and dramas evolving in the psyche of the schizophrenic and that there is room for love. For a closer look at entering the mind of a schizophrenic please see my essay *How to understand the interior life of a schizophrenic*.

I believe that most schizophrenics want to be understood. Textbook medicine describes them as being closed, unresponsive and non-communicative. This however is only to the cold observer. Numerous psychologists and psychiatrists have made the experience that opening themselves up to the psychotic, accepting their story, being genuinely interested in it will open doors to the heart of the psychotic.

Most psychotics are experiencing, as already mentioned, real drama. They might be confronted with a world take

over scheme, they might be threatened by evil forces, feel that they can foresee catastrophes in the near future. Voices might be accusing them, calling them names, talking dirty and using derogatory language. Visual hallucinations might make them see things such as light apparitions, figures who were not there and the like. Delusions might make them interpret visual stimulation in a negative way. A group of people shopping can become a group of persecutors to the psychotic. Once someone shares this interior world with a psychotic, then understanding and a dialogue can unfold. Without this sharing schizophrenics are left alone in their world of trials.

Entering the world of the psychotic is one way of loving them. There are however numerous instances when family members, spouses and friends are hard pressed to find a loving connection to the schizophrenic. They might be sending you hate mail, accusing you of unbelievable things. In such cases refute the accusations in a kind and loving manner. For example should you be accused of participating in a world take over scheme where you might be perceived as harming the psychotic, calm them down. Say that you would never join evil forces or that you would never dream of hurting the psychotic, your loved one. Reassure them of your goodwill and trust. I accused my family of cannibalism during my psychosis. They were so shocked; they did not know how to respond. This in my psychotic mind was an affirmation of my darkest most dreaded suspicion. Instead my family should have spoken to me calmly, saying that they would never do such a thing. Not in a shocked manner, but as an affirmation of their goodwill and love. This would have helped me a lot.

Should you receive hate mail, do not be hurt, think of the hallucinations and delusions your loved one is going through. Respond to the letter; let the person know that you love them anyway. If the person refuses to see you, pushes you away, stay there, keep contact. Don't give up. During my initial stay at hospital I refused my mother contact with the doctors. Because of my age the doctors had to respect this wish of mine. My mother did not stop calling me and the doctors to make sure I was not given electro-shocks and that I was being treated well at the clinic.

If a schizophrenic stops paying the rent, rearranges the entire apartment without seeming rhyme or reason keep in mind, that to the schizophrenic things like paying the rent seem unreal and unimportant. Don't get angry at them but try and get them help. On how to get a schizophrenic help please see my essay *How to get a schizophrenic to the doctor*.

During my psychosis I alienated my entire family, husband and friends. My father, sisters and husband refused contact with me. It was only my mother left who kept on trying to make contact with me although I was pushing her away, accusing her of the most terrible things, writing her hate mail and making hate phone calls.. She called me regularly, she called friends that they would come and look after me, she called neighbors and social services to look after me. She traveled to see me as much as possible. As we were living in different countries this made matters very difficult. Most of our friends did not realize just how psychotic I was. I thought I was having trouble with my mother and did not want to get involved. Family members had had enough of my abuses. One of my sisters even went so far as to accept were I to die. One day my mother and younger sister had traveled the 1000 Kilometers to see me in my too expensive new apartment I had bought during my psychosis. They came with a dear friend of mine. I refused to open the door. I was very abusive and sent them away although they had been waiting for me for hours. The poor things had to leave only with my screams in their ears, the tantrums I made and the abuse I had for them.

Loving a schizophrenic is a very difficult task indeed because it is precisely the person whom you want to love who is oftentimes pushing you away. It takes a tremendous amount of love and endurance to stick with a schizophrenic, to not give up on them and to not despair. But your love is all the schizophrenic has as a last contact to the non-psychotic world. So don't sever that link.

Love is a king quality of the soul. Love can move mountains and it can make the greatest obstacles disappear. Often a psychotic is refashioning love in his or her psychosis. Visions of love often characterize a psychosis. Behind the mask of abuse and pain somewhere there is an idea and high ideal of love

lurking. Try and tap into that. Be soft and gentle with the schizophrenic. Speak with them about love and how much you love them. This might open a door to their heart and be the first step towards healing.