

Challenging the Mental Health Narrative

A recently released self-published memoir offers a unique, authentic perspective on mental illness.

RIDLEY PARK, PA, USA, June 7, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Storytelling is essential" to combat the mental health care crisis and challenge the stigma associated with mental illness.

In "[A Walk in My Shoes: A Journey Into Depression](#)," a recently self-published memoir, Christopher Gajewski tells his story for people struggling with depression, their loved ones, and mental health care professionals and students.

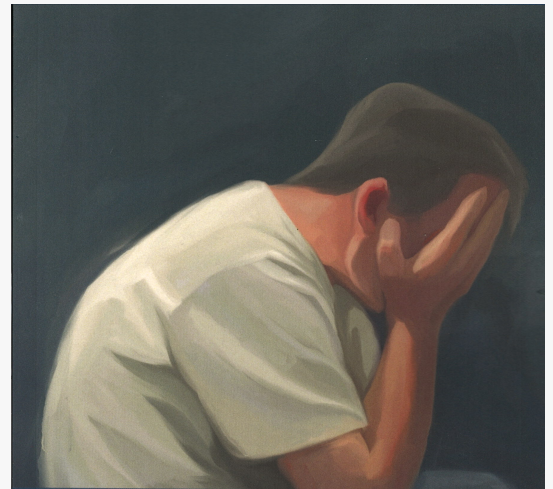
After almost taking his life at 49, Gajewski began a [podcast](#) and website, [Friends of GInA \(Gentler Insanities Anonymous\)](#). He dove into the past and present in an attempt to find a future. The book is a chronicle of that journey. With inspiration from his own life, as well as articles and posts by mental health care professionals, he fights free from his isolation as well as challenging conventional wisdom.

"Some mental care professionals don't get it," said Gajewski. "One article by an owner of a behavioral health clinic demonized the popularity of teletherapy. In her article, I heard the echo of 'Let them eat cake.'"

"Let them eat cake," wrongly attributed to Marie Antoinette, "...is taken to reflect a princess's frivolous disregard for the starving peasants or her poor understanding of their plight."

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) reports that "more than 15% of persons living below the poverty level had depression compared with 6.2% of persons living at or above the poverty level."

Many people, such as Gajewski, are the starving peasants, without the means to get proper care. Teletherapy is a less expensive option to start talking, an important part of the journey to better mental health.



A Walk in My Shoes

A Journey Into Depression

Christopher Gajewski

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Gajewski's journey encompasses his 52 years with clarity, compassion and vulnerability. He zooms in on particular moments and then zooms out for a broader perspective.

He starts talking and encourages others to do the same. He also provides advice on how to listen better.

Gajewski takes a different approach during suicide prevention month. The oft repeated advice is to reach out to people who may be struggling, check in on them. He offers that you may want to rethink that advice.

"The path deeper into my personal hell," Gajewski writes, "can be paved with the best of intentions."

Gajewski explains that you have to approach someone struggling with depression the right way or else you can do more harm than good. You need to listen and understand their altered perception of reality. You cannot just barge in and try to fix it.

"Basically," Gajewski writes, "if you have the emotional intelligence of a shrub, don't reach out."

We isolate, Gajewski continues, to protect ourselves. If the wrong person reaches out to us, like some of my close friends and family members, it pierces that protective shell and does more harm than good.

Gajewski struggled most of his life without even realizing he was struggling. He lived as a highly functioning depressive without realizing the disease had spread into every facet of his life. Escaping into workaholism and co-dependency, he had a successful career, marriage and was a leader and educator in his industry. He was doing fine. Until he was not.

Later, he would realize that it was not a matter of "if" another depressive episode would swamp him, but "when." The "when" was the beginning of 2019.

The book is a beginning, instead of the "The End" he had planned.

"Depression, anxiety, PTSD and the effects of childhood trauma are so misunderstood," Gajewski writes, "by both people struggling and their loved ones. The stigma attached to mental illness makes it even harder to understand and talk about."

Gajewski wants to challenge the stigma and perceptions of mental illness, the caricatures that are so prevalent in our society.

He invites everybody to follow along on his journey. Though the book is available for purchase on Amazon and IngramSpark, a free PDF is available for download through his website.

Christopher Gajewski

Friends of Gina

+1 610-517-8474

chris@friendsofgina.com

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