

☀ Values

- Courage
- Determination
- Boldness
- Advocacy
- Leadership
- Social Emotional Learning

☀ Reflection Questions

Do you know anyone who is struggling with mental illness?

Have you found comfort in talking with someone who's been through a similar thing?

What is the difference between a "patient" and a "consumer" of mental health services? Do you think this is an important distinction to make?

☀ Lessons Learned

Helping others is often the best therapy.

People who have "been there" can help others who are having problems.

Mental illness crosses all socio-economic boundaries. It can happen to anyone.

Self-help groups are often more effective and less expensive than traditional care.

Joe Rogers was once homeless, wandering the streets of New York City and fishing through dumpsters for food. Today, he is the "Martin Luther King of mental health," a powerful and respected advocate who is revolutionizing the mental health care system. This is the story of how Joe used his own experiences with mental illness to help others help themselves. He used his insider's knowledge of how the system works (and doesn't) to design self-help programs for people who live with mental illness. Joe has made Pennsylvania a model of consumer-run mental health programs and has saved the mental health system millions of dollars. "Helping others is often the best therapy," he says.

☀ Language Arts: SEL & Diversity

Watch the movie *Shine* and invite students to think of other brilliant or eccentric people who are judged as abnormal and who struggle to fit into society. Have students read a book: *The Beast* by Tracy Thompson about her life with depression; *Girl, Interrupted* by Susanna Kaysen about her experience in a mental hospital; *Nine Highland Road* by Michael Winerip; *Is There No Place on Earth for Me?* By Susan Sheehan about how she developed mental illness in her teens. Then have them write book reports and share what they have learned with the class. Invite a social worker or psychologist to answer student questions about mental illness.

☀ Social Studies: Diversity

Research the incidence of mental illnesses like schizophrenia, manic-depression, autism, Downs's syndrome. Chart the age of onset, contributors, treatments, medications, results. How does mental illness affect a patient's family and loved ones? Research and discuss. Study the cost and quality of caring for people with mental illness. Compare consumer-run and/ or community based programs like those in Pennsylvania vs. mental institutions.

☀ Community Service: Service Learning

Create a peer-tutoring program with students in your school's special education program. Send cards or care packages to young people in a local hospital or mental health facility. Help special education students organize a self-help advocacy group in your community. Contact the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-help Clearing house at www.mhselfhelp.org. Create an exhibit of arts and crafts made by handicapped persons in your community.