

Dear Friends,

We would like to offer lessons our family has learned from our life with our Mike.

First, Catch Your Breath. Dealing with mental illness is not a sprint, it is a Marathon. One of our counselors told us that. And even if you succeed fixing a symptom, there is likely more to come.

Second, Resources. It is virtually impossible for families with much more limited resources & support to deal with this. Think about those cases you read about in the paper. The family tried, but... Our heart goes to these people. We could hardly cope even with so much at our disposal. And for cases like Mike's, only the government can assemble what's needed. And Minnesota has done as good a job as any state in our country. They are truly a model, with on-the-ground help and a legal framework that balances patients' rights and community protection.

Third, Hope. We are encouraged by the efforts to remove the stigma of mental health and put it on parity with physical illnesses. Schizophrenia alone afflicts about 1/2 of 1% of our population. And the political debates on national health care are finally including mental illness. As just noted, getting the help needed is beyond the means of most families.

Finally, there are significant strides being made in diagnosing and understanding various mental illnesses, some of it at MIT. In 2007, Bob's MIT fraternity brother Jim Poitras and his wife Pat gave a major gift to establish a center for Psychiatric Disorders Research. For one, their researchers now have developed a diagnostic – not a clinical – procedure to identify schizophrenia – and at much earlier ages. The brain is so complex and there is much, much more to understand, but this is a beginning.

We hope that that in the future those afflicted with mental illness will be able to benefit from research like this and from the support from communities like ours, and live lives of quality and maybe even joy. We want to say how deeply grateful we are for all the love and support we have received from all of you.

With love, Liz, Deena & Bob

