

Like millions of parents in the United States whose children suffer from mental illness, my family has experienced pain and heartache, hope and anxiety, bright days and incredibly long dark nights as we helped our son John cope with the severe depression and anxiety that has profoundly affected his life and ours for years.

Unlike the vast majority of parents, however, circumstances have forced my family to deal with this intensely personal matter in a very public way.

John's mental illness, like cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other serious ailments, can be life threatening—a fact starkly demonstrated by the events of January second and third. John obtained a firearm from an acquaintance and checked into a local hotel. Unbeknown to us, he intended to end his life at that place and at that time.

Fortunately, a friend convinced him that his life was indeed worth living. He checked out of the hotel on the third, leaving the gun behind.

As has been widely reported, when the gun was found in the room the manager of the hotel called the Boardman police. The Boardman police contacted the attorney who previously represented John. The attorney then apprised my family of what had happened. Until that phone call we did not know John had been contemplating ending his own life. We then made the decision to have John voluntarily turn himself into the Adult Parole Authority for an alleged violation of his probation.

While I am keenly aware that John's actions carry potentially serious legal ramifications, the family is also extremely grateful that he still with us so we can, as a family, continue to treat his illness.

And it can be treated. As the National Alliance for Mental Illness notes, more than ten million Americans experience serious mental illness every year and more than 20% of young people between the ages of 13 and 18 experience a serious mental disorder at some point in their life. My son falls into that category.

Thankfully, effective treatments do exist for John's conditions. But, as anyone who has been impacted by serious mental illness will attest, the path to wellness can be long and arduous. In John's case, that path was made more difficult by the publicity that surrounded his 2013 arrest and subsequent court proceedings. While most people involved in similar incidents are able to deal with the consequences of their actions and seek treatment for their illness in private, John is and was constantly exposed to ridicule and scorn even though he took full responsibility for his conduct.

Despite the challenges caused by the notoriety of his case, John has made steady progress over the past year. He is enrolled in College where he made the Dean's List for the Fall Semester. He was adhering to and actively participating in the treatment protocol that had been designed for him.

As families who find themselves in situations like ours will readily admit, however, relapses can, and often do occur, many times without warning. John, has, unfortunately, experienced a relapse.

I recognize that both the media and the public are interested in what has taken place. I believe that they have the right to know that John's case is being processed in the same way that any similar case would be handled by law enforcement and the courts.

While those proceedings will and should be public, our efforts to help John deal with his illness should not. I ask that the media and the community at large to respect my family's absolute need for privacy at this critical point in John's life. His prospects for recovery, for living a full and productive life, hang in the balance.

We ask for your understanding and your prayers at this difficult time.

John Dellick