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I am here today to talk about my journey with my son who is now 23 years old. In 2011 he was diagnosed with schizophrenia after a very serious psychotic breakdown. He spent 3 months in Yale Psychiatric Hospital. He was discharged three times and readmitted twice because of suicidal thoughts and an attempted suicide.

I had been trying to get my son help since 2006, each time the psychiatrist would spend a short time with him, diagnose him with depression or social anxiety, and put him on medication. There was no therapy. The only doctor that talked about real therapy did not take insurance. Thinking back now I wonder why there was no deep probing given the history of mental illness on both sides of the family.

My son, a gifted artist, was never a problem in school or at home, violence and belligerence are not part of his nature. But, beneath his peaceful exterior were thoughts that needed to be explored. I am thankful he wasn't into violent movies or video games, instead he was into art. He read a lot about artists and some of the stories did influence his bizarre behavior. His mind is vulnerable, as many are.

Once he turned 18 that was the end of me being able to help him. I couldn't even get him an appointment with a psychiatrist. I remember trying to make an appointment, crying over the phone, pleading. But no, they said HE needed to call. Now this was a kid that couldn't keep it together, was sleeping all day, going for long walks and drives in the middle of the night.

After an arrest in 2008, a well intentioned person called me and said "your son has a problem". I thought, yea, but there is nothing I can do. That's the truth, once they are 18, even if they live with you and are financially dependent on you, you are helpless. You live day to day with the darkness, scared. It is almost as if, just like your child is denying he is sick, you have no choice but to deny, because there is nothing you can do.

In 2011, clearly in a psychotic state, he was caught trespassing and arrested. The police never suggested taking him to the emergency room. When I took him the next day, at the last minute he said he didn't need to be admitted so they were not going to take him. I convinced them otherwise. After being discharged and looking for a high place to jump from I brought him back and they just upped his meds and were going to send him home, I pushed back and they agreed to take him for "observation". He was admitted the next day. The next time he was discharged, he attempted suicide.

While my son was in the hospital, I saw patients come and go, stick them on meds and send them out, much like my earlier experience with the psychiatrists. These are very dangerous medications and until they find the right one and it is taken regularly, it can lead to tragedy.

The sad truth seems to be that the mentally ill do not get the help they need until there's a crisis. Can this be changed, or is it just the nature of the illness? I would like to see restrictions lifted on parents for children over the age of 18 that are financially dependent on them. Also, I was happy

to see the mental health legislation introduced by Senator Blumenthal. I hope included will be aid in training for parents.

Thank-you very much for the opportunity to tell my story; I hope it can help bring about lessening the obstacles for parents in getting the help their children need.

\* On the flip side I included something my son did it while he was in the hospital. It warmed my heart.