

## NEURO-WHAT?

**NEURODIVERSE:** "having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of 'normal.'"

**SOURCE:** <http://neurocosmopolitanism.com/neurodiversity-some-basic-terms-definitions/>

## Terms you need to know

**NEUROTYPICAL:** "having a style of neurocognitive functions that falls within the dominant societal standards of 'normal.'"

# MAKING NEURODIVERSITY NORMAL: STUDENTS REDEFINE NORMAL- CY, FIGHT FOR EQUALITY IN PUB- LIC SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

**W**hen dealing with mental illness, it's hard enough to tackle it when your brain is fighting back. But when the rest of society turns their heads, the battle becomes nearly impossible.

Every day, thousands of people battle mental illnesses. It is an extremely common problem- according to NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 1 in 5 children and teens between the ages of 13 and 18 have or will have a serious mental illness.

You may know many people who have anxiety, or bipolar disorder, or another condition. But many people often choose to hide those differences from society. For instance, many students who suffer from mental illness often tend to stay behind the scenes and not let anyone know that they are suffering.

The question that arises in communities and schools is: why are these teens afraid to come out and share their

problems? Why are they afraid to get help?

"I believe that the mentally ill don't get seen as people- they get seen as sick more than normal, even though it's not a disease to be mentally ill," Melissa Byrd said, "and I think that people discriminate against them, even though it's not their [the mentally ill's] fault."

Some students who suffer from a mental disorder live day to day without letting others know how they really feel. There are many steps being taken to change the statistics, and help more teens feel comfortable coming out and talking about their mental illnesses.

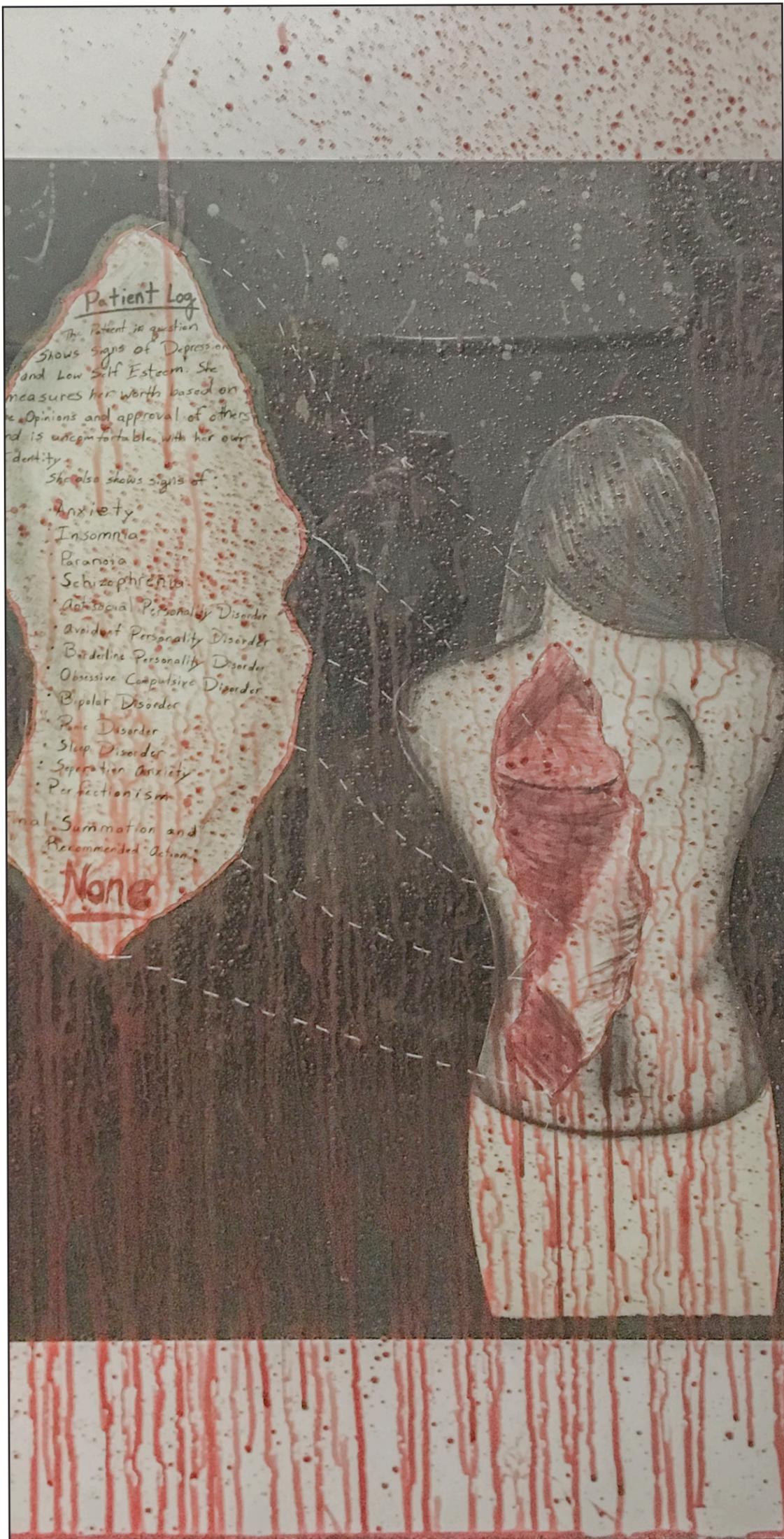
"I think that society is definitely moving towards a place where people who are much more comfortable to talk about mental illnesses or mental disability, especially in social media, its kinda to be more accepting and open about things like that and while I do think that there are some... ridicule or non-belief amongst people

who don't really understand what these people are going through," Neely Mullen, senior editor of the literary magazine said.

In school and out of school there are some slight changes that are being made to bring more awareness to mental illnesses.

"I'm on student council, so we are actively trying to promote awareness of mental illness and things like that," Mullen said. "We do a mental health week, And try to make the culture more accepting of people to talk about their mental illness and be more vulnerable. As things stand out there probably are students who have depression or anxiety that don't talk about it because they don't feel safe talking about it but that's something that were actively trying to combat and change."

In the future, the changes that students and other community members should get, is to not be afraid and to get comfortable enough to stop hiding.



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