

Transcript

Brian: Hey, welcome to our podcast. I'm your host Brian.

Ronald: I'm Ronald. What's popping?!

Brian: Today in our episode, "It's a Disorder, Not a Decision." Mental Illness is our topic

Ronald: Yeah, so our episode, "It's a Disorder, Not a Decision," we'll focus mainly on how medical professionals misdiagnose mental illness. How that affects individuals view themselves and how society stigmatizes mental illness, and how people who have a mental illness are misunderstood and they actually don't choose to have a mental illness.

Brian: And also, we'll be looking at mental illness and what it means in terms of the justice system.

-Transitional music-

Ronald: We're going to talk about how there's psychological assessments that could be false and how that impacts a person's self-understanding and how society is impacted as a result, too. So, like, in the inkblot test, what the image of our podcast episode is... wait, what did you see again?

Brian: Umm... so what I see right now. I'm looking at the image and I see, like an ox skull?. I'm not sure why, it just reminds me of it, like the outline of it. Umm.. yeah, that's what it reminds me of. What about you?

Ronald: Yeah, what I see is a dragon, or I swear to god, like a Final Fantasy boss. It actually looks like a Final Fantasy boss

-laughter-

Ronald: And then, so like, when looking at the test, right? When the psychologist tests us and sees our reaction to the image, based on what we said, like, you saw a skull and I saw

a dragon or some kind of monster from Final Fantasy, he'll think that we have a mental illness or a thought disorder or something, but that's not necessarily the case. I'm pretty sure you don't have a mental illness, neither do I.

Brian: It's like the divide, you know? Are we actually mentally ill if we create these images in our minds, or are we just really imaginative and creative?

Ronald: Yeah, exactly. It depends on life exp too. In my childhood a long time ago, I played a lot of Final Fantasy games, so there are a lot of dragons in there and there are Final Fantasy bosses that look like this, whereas Brian...

Brian: Yeah, I've never played FF, so that's why I don't really see anything that resembles what you see, but it's so interesting how we both see different images that we create in our head

Ronald: Yeah, yeah, and then people going into these kinds of test, they might trust the “professional” on what they're saying, and so they might think that they're a danger to society. They might think that they actually have a mental illness, and you brought up something about that earlier, didn't you?

Brian: Yeah, it's about misdiagnoses from medical professionals. There's a case in the United States, where a doctor actually misdiagnosed a bunch of patients. I think it was with Alzheimer's, it wasn't like Schizophrenia or anything, but it was so interesting because in the doctor's diagnoses when he told the patients, everyone's perspective on life, just kind of changed once he told them their diagnoses. Some people quit their jobs to go travel. Some people spend more time with their family. Some people actually committed suicide once they found out about their diagnoses, but in reality, what happened was the doctor actually misdiagnosed the patients and that diagnosis it just

completely changed their whole life. They weren't actually mentally ill or “insane,” but because that doctor told them their diagnosis, their mind just changed and started thinking that they're actually ill. So that's... it's just... it's just such a powerful thing that professionals have. That diagnosis can change a person's whole perspective.

Ronald: Yeah, and then, with abstractions, like medical diagnoses and that earlier misdiagnosis, not only does it impact the person as a whole, it impacts how society views them as well. And so, word got out that that person was diagnosed as, I don't know... a psychopath, right? Society might view them as dangerous. They'll be like, “oh, this guy needs to be locked up. This guy is dangerous. He's going to harm us,” and they might think negatively of that person.

-Transitional music-

Brian: They see a homeless person, they have that misconception, where, you know, they can just go out and just... well, they're homeless because they chose to be, but a lot of the times they don't choose to be homeless. It's that they have some sort of barrier that prevents them from, you know, getting a job or going back to society and how their life was before. I think that a lot of times they have some sort of mental illness that prevents them from getting access to resources.

Ronald: Yeah, and then it's just certain labels, like, “oh, it's just another homeless person. Oh it's another mentally ill person,” right? Where it's people making those labels, including medical professionals who are kind of insensitive to the individual's needs and problems as well. They don't really try to resolve the person's problems or personal problems in a way. I know a lot of medical professionals. They kind of just view people with mental illness as a medical fact. They kind of just view them as, “oh it's another

patient that needs to be cured or fixed. They're broken," right? That's not necessarily the case.

-Transitional music-

Brian: We hear in the media, in the news, about all these offenders or all these people who offend, such as Vincent Li. The gentleman, I think, who killed a guy in Winnipeg on a Greyhound bus, where he decapitated him. And he's actually found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder (NCRMD). Also, in the Matthew De Grood case that happened in Calgary, at a house party where he stabbed and killed 5 people. He was also found NCRMD. So, what does that mean in terms of the justice system? So, an act committed or an emission made while suffering from a mental disorder that rendered the person incapable of appreciating the nature and quality of the act, emission, or knowing that it was wrong. What this means is, a person who has no intent of committing, who had no mens rea – which means intent when committing the act – that person cannot be found guilty or... no moral blameworthiness can be placed on that person. So they can't be responsible for their actions.

Ronald: Yeah, and that's because of, like, they have uhh... they're diagnosed with a mental illness, right? And so it's not necessarily their fault too. In Vince Li's case, he didn't murder or decapitate the guy's head in such a grotesque manner just simply because he found it enjoyable or that he really wanted to kill the guy. What happened was that he said that he heard a voice from God telling him that, "you need to kill that guy, or else he's going to kill you." And so, he acted based on that...

Brian: Yeah. So basically what happens is in his criminal defense, this legal defense finds that person not criminally responsible for their actions because they didn't have any

intent. That's the whole main point of this legal defense, is that there was actually no intent in committing the crime so therefore, you can't morally blame that person for their actions. In a lot of people, there's just a lot of misunderstanding about how this works. People think it's a free pass. You know, he doesn't have to take responsibility for his actions, right? I think that's just a big misunderstanding, but in this case, when in a diagnosis, when a person is found NCRMD, they're actually placed into a psychiatric institution and tests are done on them to make sure that they're... to help rehabilitate them back in society. They don't just get a free pass from not going to jail.

Ronald: And that's a big misunderstanding that society places on the label of a person having a mental illness. They think, "oh that person is *very* violent and they're out to actually just harm society as a whole and they should be locked up," when in reality, diagnoses that reveal that a person has a mental illness need to be understood on a more personal, individualistic level by taking into consideration that these people with mental illness don't necessarily act in a way that's harmful.

Brian: Vincent Li, he was actually recently given an absolute discharge by the Manitoba Criminal Code Review Board and he was deemed not to be a significant risk to the public. You know, there's so much controversy surrounding this because people, you know, they think that he's going to come out and reoffend, but, you know, like, so many tests were done. He was given medicine to treat his schizophrenia. These professionals, they wouldn't just release him if they knew that he would be a danger to society. If he has a high of reoffending. Isabelle Grant, a UBC law professor made some comments in regards to Vince Li's absolute discharge. She says that we have to be respectful of people who disagree with the decision on that basis, but recognize that we have made a decision

as a civilized country that we don't punish people who didn't know what they were doing at the time of the offense. And really they didn't know that they were doing something wrong. It's a very very small subset of people. So I think what she says it really goes hand in hand with how a lot of the general population just, you know, they're just really misinformed of what actually goes on the process of this absolute discharge and what happens with people who are mentally ill in the system.