

I am Ganesh. I claim to be a '*recovered*' schizophrenia patient...

I use the word '*recovered*'... because I have coped.

By the end of this presentation, you should get an overview of a typical onset... its manifestations, ...and ...perhaps ...take away some insights on coping.

First... my background.

ABOUT ME



Demographic



Academics



Career

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

I am Indian. From a semi-orthodox, middle-class Hindu family, born 1959...

Since my diagnosis at age nineteen, I have acquired an engineering degree, an MBA, and a Master's in Social and Applied Economics.

In addition... I have performed as a management consultant in the USA, Japan, and India.

I share this to shout out... many of us can overcome to varying degrees.

THE ARCHIVED ANXIETY



Authored Books



Revisiting Emotions



Coming to Terms

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

I have authored two books on the psychosocial aspects of schizophrenia.

The precursors to these books were notes I wrote about everything that had affected me ...from trivial to severe...

As I kept revisiting and rewriting these notes, I felt many emotions...

Grief... anger... fear... sadness, shame...

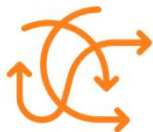
For instance, I felt sheepish about the clothes I wore to my high-school dance...

...I wore an *outsized* velvet bowtie, a maroon shirt, ...and pink bell-bottoms laced on the outside.

From my dress sense, one could guess I was in for the bizarre. Jokes apart, I kept learning as I kept exploring.

...I came to terms with myself by revisiting the damaging events in my life...

MY SANDBOX



Religious Opium



Cotton and Fire



Art for Art's Sake

My upbringing can be called liberal.

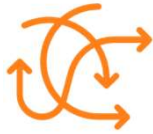
My family did not insist on strict religious practices.

Although Hinduism, like modern physics, points to the convergence of matter, energy, space, and time. Its elaborate religious *rituals* starkly contrast with science...

Hence, when I thought about Religion, God, and Creation, it always ended in a frustrating mental deadlock...

The elders said, "You can't see the battery in the light of the torch."

MY SANDBOX



Religious Opium



Cotton and Fire



Art for Art's Sake

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

Next, ...in India, there was a lot of taboo and ignorance around sex... there still is.

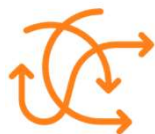
For example, we never received any instructions on safe touch. So, we moved on from childhood to adolescence, learning mostly by chance...

When I was 17, I got physically involved with a girl of about 15, something unusual at that time in my community.

My mother was shocked. She warned me that a relationship between a boy and a girl at my age was like cotton and fire. I would get burnt.

The girl and I 'made out' in 'abandoned' temples, rural fields, and other remote places... going from awkward kissing to the unlawful edge. This sexual experimentation left me in a confusing moral dilemma.

MY SANDBOX



Religious Opium



Cotton and Fire



Art for Art's Sake

To add to that, the girl was *obsessively* artistic...

She tried to make me see art in almost everything.

...she pointed to arrangements in objects... nuances in body language, and ...undertones in random happenings.

So... it confused me even further.



Question

Now, let's put all that together... What was the triggering ingredient?

Could it be... ..one, my fuzzy religious background...?

...two, the 'absence' of sex education...?

...or three, a perplexing artistic perspective...?

Or was it all three...?

THE MANIFESTATIONS



Jealousy... Suspicion



Significance in Trivia



Strange Illusions

At first, I sailed along in the relationship with the girl, believing it was the best thing ever.

Then... I wanted a full monopoly on the girl's time.

I was jealous if she spoke to another boy.

I got upset if any boy even stepped into the physical space between us.

Soon, the jealousy escalated to suspicion.

...I was sure the girl was offering sexual favors to older men.

So, I stealthily watched her door... stalking her.

Othello couldn't have done it better.

THE MANIFESTATIONS



Jealousy... Suspicion



Significance in Trivia



Strange Illusions

Such behavior may well have been written off as a passing phase.

But then I started reading significance into trivia.

Trivial things, like the words on a radio show...

or things overheard just in passing... had instant relevance to my thinking...

The connections were often hostile.

Also, as is common, I heard voices. Mostly criticisms...

THE MANIFESTATIONS



Jealousy... Suspicion



Significance in Trivia



Strange Illusions

To top it all off, I saw things too...

...I saw the footprint of the first man on the moon brightly etched on the floor of my room.

...I saw 'my' reflection in the dead of night as a warped and deformed image of somebody else.

...and my favorite ...I saw a gray outline of a huge hand flipping me off.

THE FIRST EPISODE



The accident



The paranoia



The silence

All this time, my family had no clue something could be wrong.
One fateful day, I was headed on a motorcycle to an academic examination...

unprepared given my state of mind... but convinced that the answers would come to me... all I had to do was get to the venue...

My motorcycle was racing, as was my mind;
...I slammed broadside into another vehicle.

I was immediately taken to a doctor who bandaged a minor wound on my leg... and then sent me home.

THE FIRST EPISODE



The accident



The paranoia



The silence

At the instant of the accident, my symptoms reached an inflection point.

I suddenly doubted my entire environment, including my family.

I sensed persecution and a hidden conspiracy in everyday happenings...

I then assumed anything I said would harm me.

THE FIRST EPISODE



The accident



The paranoia



The silence

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

So, I decided to keep silent.

This silence was not apparent to my family.

They thought I was just resting my injured leg.

But it became obvious and alarming when the silence continued for two days.

So, being religiously inclined, my family first smeared my forehead with holy ash and called a priest.

Eventually, they took me to see a psychiatrist.

INSIGHT



My 'Aha'...



My scientific temper



Reboot over time

Early insight rarely happens because one is stuck in distorted perceptions.

...Insight often starts with an unexpected 'aha.' I found my 'aha' in an observation by a doctor:

MY 'AHA'...

"Don't debate whether whatever you smell, hear, or see is fact or fantasy..."



Instead, ask whether the stimulus or the thought can help you live effectively and collaboratively with others."

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

"Don't debate whether whatever you smell, hear, or see is fact or fantasy..."

Instead, ask whether the stimulus or the thought can help you live effectively and collaboratively with others."

That was my touchstone. My litmus test for normality.

By letting '*me*' judge what is normal, the doctor facilitated my choosing to take medicine...

INSIGHT



My 'Aha'...



My scientific temper



My system reboot

There were only a handful of anti-psychotics when I was diagnosed, ...most with side-effects.

There was drowsiness and dullness on the one hand and a vague promise on the other... But I believed science could help. So, I braved the effects.

Over time, my metabolism learned to process the medicines appropriately.

Thankfully, side effects in many of the newer treatments are tolerable.

INSIGHT



My 'Aha'...



My scientific temper



My system reboot

But taking medicine is not all that is needed.

One cannot take medicine, eat... sleep... and expect to get better.

We need to reboot like a computer installing new personal attitudes.

So, in addition to medicine, I used three mental reboot codes as attitudes, or what I call 'mantras'...

MANTRAS

1. Fate is what you meet, and destiny is how you meet it...

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

The first realization was to accept my Fate. I understood Fate as different from Destiny.

I saw Fate as what we meet and ...Destiny ...as set off by how we face Fate.

As I move on, I acknowledge my ability to influence my future... even if limited.

MANTRAS

1. Fate is what you meet, and destiny is how you meet it
2. Realize your absolute, non-relative, and unique standing...

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

The second insight is a psychosocial understanding.

I try and view myself as absolute, non-relative, and unique.

When I grant this, I know others are absolute and unique too.

...I understand we need not compare.

MANTRAS

1. Fate is what you meet, and destiny is how you meet it
2. Realize your absolute, non-relative, and unique standing
3. Know (your) betterment or improvement in every circumstance...

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

My third leap of faith was to believe there is betterment or improvement in every circumstance. Advancement may come in disguise.

... When you aim for material profit, you may gain an intellectual treasure

...When you search for knowledge, it may come instead as a rewarding relationship.

...When you seek love, it may bolster self-esteem.

These mantras keep me sheltered in a stormy world.

I OF THE STORM

Fringe Symptoms

Victim-Survivor-Warrior

Peace of Mind is Paramount

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

Even now, I experience what I call 'fringe symptoms.'
For example, auditory hallucinations at the threshold of my 'hearing.'
These symptoms occur for ten minutes or so after a *stressful interaction*.
The triggers could be a forceful movie... or other intense stimulants.
I have learned to be patient and watch the symptoms subside.
I engage in physical tasks... like making a sandwich... or taking a stroll...
I do physical things that help ground me, and... ..the symptoms disappear.

I OF THE STORM

Fringe Symptoms

Victim-Survivor-Warrior

Peace of Mind is Paramount

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

As is often said... changing our mentality from victim to survivor is essential.

But... I would go even beyond, as a cohort of mine suggested.

From victim... to survivor... to warrior.

We need not keep shooting ourselves in the foot, thinking our symptoms are insurmountable.

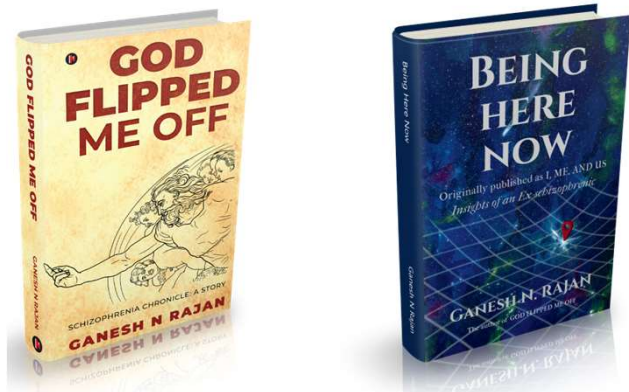
Instead, feel like a survivor... *battle* like a warrior...

Have and repeat thoughts like

This will also pass; I need not be perfect... or that effort will give results... someplace, sometime.

Once I accepted that my peace of mind was paramount, the trivial pressures no longer mattered.

MY BOOKS



"All wisdom is plagiarism, only stupidity is original"

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

Insights that helped me get over distress are shared in my two books.

These two books, "God Flipped Me Off" and "Being Here Now," aligned a lot of thinking for me.

I invite you to read them.

Many of the ideas in them are not new. It has been said:

"All wisdom is plagiarism; only stupidity is original."

Incidentally, these books are on display at the IEPA booth.

Please take the grain and blow the chaff away...

CONCLUSION

- ...Manifestations different; Learnings similar
- ...Not medicine alone; Rebuild new attitudes
- ...Care of friends and family...

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

In conclusion, triggers for onset and the manifestations can be varied... but the learnings are similar.

Also, managing the condition does not happen with medicine alone. We need to rebuild using new personal attitudes.

Furthermore, the care of family and friends cannot be understated.

...I am grateful for their support.

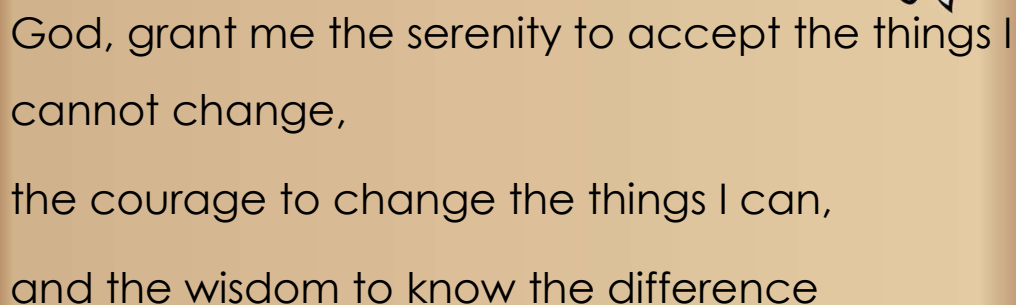
Once they understood the condition... they followed through with care.

Today, self-help groups assist both care-seekers and caregivers.

I encourage you to connect with people having lived experience in such groups.

Finally, I consider prayer important. Something *is* listening. I think the 'serenity prayer' is spot on and bears repeating...

THE SERENITY PRAYER...

A scroll with a brown, aged appearance, featuring a wavy, torn edge. The text is written in a simple, black, sans-serif font. The scroll is set against a background of a colorful, abstract gradient that transitions from orange and red on the left to green and blue on the right.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I
cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference

IEPA 14, Lausanne, 2023

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

...the courage to change the things I can...

and the wisdom to know the difference."

So, even as you wait for explanations, whisper a prayer to whatever force you believe in.

It could be divine, as in a God, or mundane, ...as a suggestion to the subconscious. But, something...*is* ...listening.



THANK YOU

I thank IEPA and SCARF India for making this possible.

And thank you for your patient listening...