How The National Institute of Mental Health is Working Towards Peace

I think I can speak for everyone when I say that the year of 2020 has been… less than ideal. We've dealt with fires and natural disasters, the recent chaos and stress that comes with a particularly *exhausting* election, and of course the "great coronavirus pandemic". That within itself has brought its own set of trials. We've watched loved ones get sick, even die. We've had to close down our establishments. Some people have lost their jobs. We've had fear, after fear, after fear. But of course, you don't want to hear all these things you already know. I for one, know that if I hear another fast-food restaurant start off their commercial with, "In these uncertain times, we are all in this together. Buy some chicken nuggets," I will willingly commit corona. Regardless, it is completely understandable if you are having feelings of anxiety and depression. With all the stress the world is going through right now, it's inevitable. Mental illness has been plaguing America for ages, getting worse and worse in the past few years. And during this "difficult situation", you are bound to struggle a little bit. Fortunately, the National Institute of Mental Health is working to change things.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is the country's largest federal agency for research on mental disorders. It is one of the twenty seven centers that make up the National Institute of Health. Their goal is to prevent and cure mental illnesses through research and understanding. They provide information and awareness, as well as resources for those who need help. This year they created a strategic plan for how they are going to combat the mental illness pandemic raging the people of America, made up of four goals: Defining mechanisms underlying complex behavior, examine mental illness trajectories across the lifespan, strive for prevention and cures, and strengthen the public health impact of NIMH supported research. Through these goals, they hope to eradicate, prevent, and bring support to those dealing with mental illnesses.

Mental health is something extremely important, that is often put down as not as important as other illnesses. But the truth is, your brain is an organ just like your stomach, lungs, and heart. It needs to be taken care of. And when it's sick, you need to do all you can to fix it. Your brain controls every other part of your body. If your brain does not create the right balance of chemicals, things can go very wrong. I have had my own experiences with mental illnesses. In the past I have suffered from both depression and anxiety. I've gone through periods where I couldn't bring myself to take care of myself, couldn't even see the point of living. I know and love people who suffer from things very similar. I have a best friend who has social anxiety. I know people with OCD. Step into a public highschool for goodness sake, depression is everywhere. Recently, mental health has been gaining a lot more awareness, which is amazing. NIMH is doing all they can to continue to raise awareness and research. The more we know about mental illnesses, the more we can do to fix it.

Peace starts at the heart of the people. If individuals do not have peace in their own lives, it is pretty difficult to create world peace. As someone who has dealt with anxiety, I can say from experience that mental illness is far from peaceful. As 2020 comes to an end, I don't see our problems getting any better soon. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if things got worse. That is why the efforts of NIMH to improve mental health is more important than ever.

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"The National Institute of Mental Health Strategic Plan." *National Institute of Mental Health*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.nimh.nih.gov/about/strategic-planning-reports/index.shtml.