



**28th Annual OCD
Conference**

**San Francisco, California
July 8, 2023**

**Moderated by:
Dr. Darlene Davis-Goodwine**

**IN MY SHOES:
HIGHLIGHTING THE REALITIES
OF THE BIPOC AND CULTURAL
ROAD TO RECOVERY**

**Uma R. Chatterjee,
M.S., MHPS**
IOCDF Advocate

Alexandra Reynolds
IOCDF Advocate

Rachel Ehrenberg, M.A.
OCD Advocate

Valerie Andrews
IOCDF Lead Advocate

Meet the Speakers



Uma R. Chatterjee



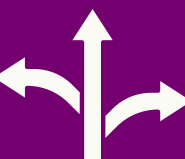
Alexandra Reynolds



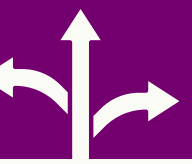
Rachel Ehrenberg



Valerie Andrews



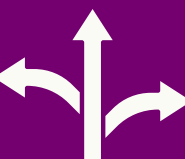
Uma's Journey



Lifelong OCD + Comorbidities



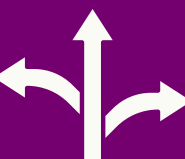
- Severe symptoms from earliest memories (3-4)
- Exacerbated by severe chronic abuse & trauma
- Progressively dysfunctional
 - Left college after 2 years with 1.83 GPA
- Chronically suicidal, several other diagnoses
- Joined religious cult at 14 largely due to OCD
- Institutionalized 2x as teenager
 - Written off by family as "spoiled"



2nd Generation South Asian Immigrant

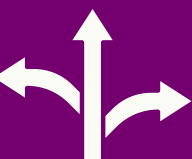
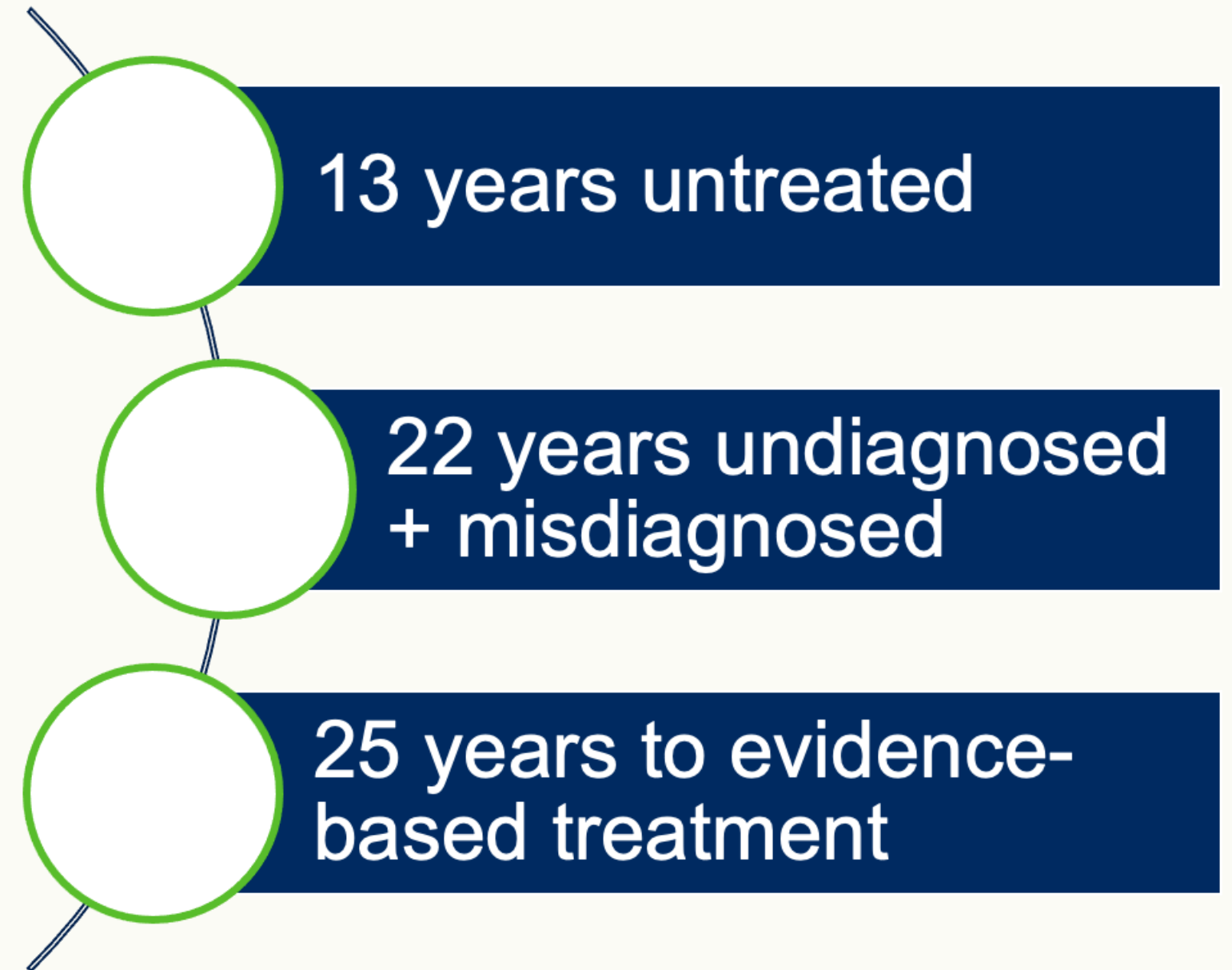


- Lack of healthcare access
- Disbelief in the Western medical system
- Zero awareness of mental health/illness
- No extended family or cultural community for support
- Inadvertent encouragement of compulsions due to cultural norms/expectations



Cultural Barriers to Treatment

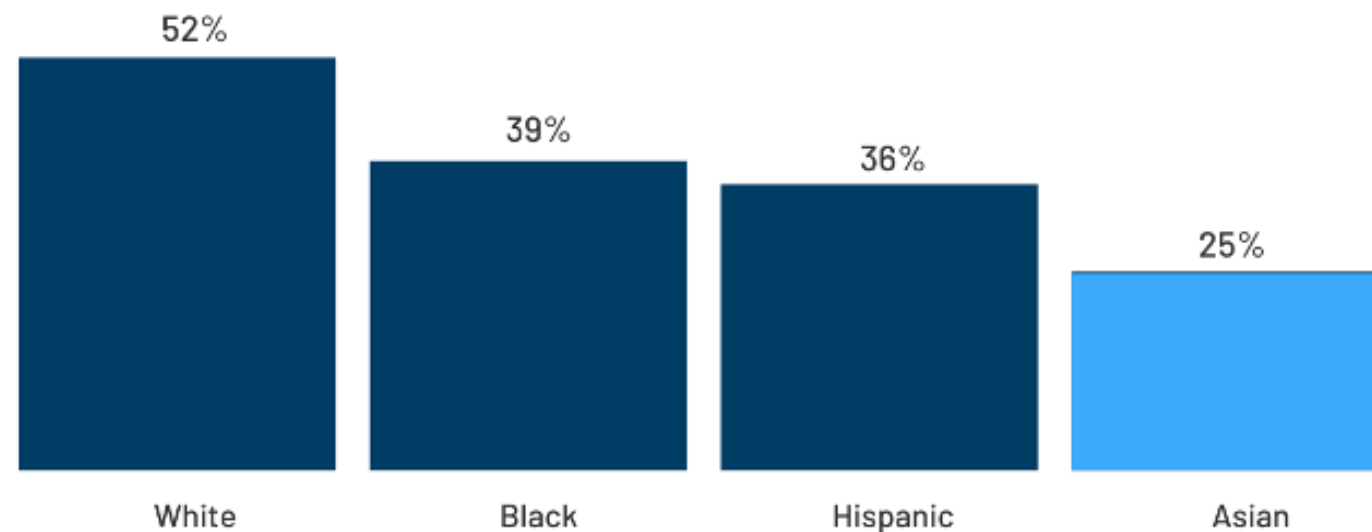
- Complete denial of mental illness
- Poverty + lack of healthcare access
- Gaslighting mental illness as "being spoiled" & "privilege" from living in America
- No familial support whatsoever
- Financially scraping by... while severely mentally ill



Proper Treatment at 25

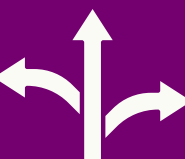


Share of Adults (Ages 18 and up) with Any Mental Illness Who Received Mental Health Services in the Past Year, 2021

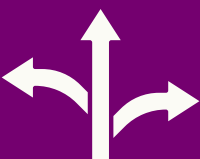
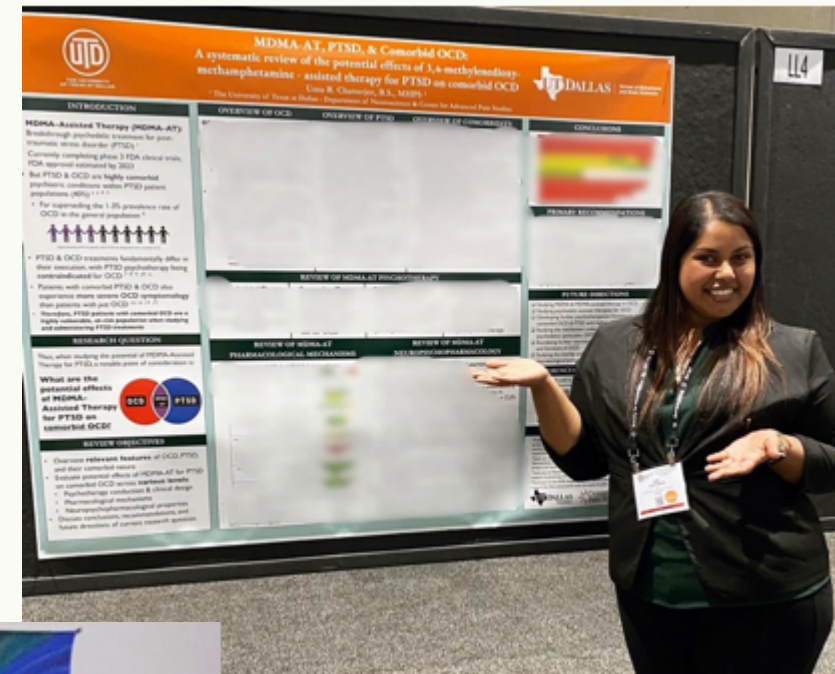


Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2021.

- Fully dysfunctional and suffering
- Cancer/PTSD therapist believed OCD wasn't real
- Found online advocacy & ERP
- Began ERP with OCD-trained psychologists
- Treatment complications with comorbid PTSD

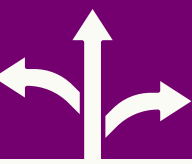


Equitable Recovery: What Is Possible





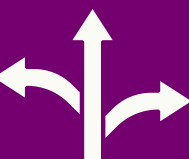
Alexandra's Journey



When OCD is All You Know



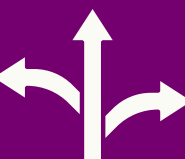
- Earliest memories of OCD- 4 years old
- Comorbid Major Depression and Complex PTSD from severe chronic abuse
- OCD worsened with age & noticed
- I was "different" from my peers
 - Struggled in school
 - Failed out of undergrad with 2.0 GPA



Growing up Latinx with OCD



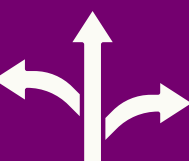
- Parents distrusted medical system
 - Therapists seen as meddlers
 - Therapy for "sick" people
- Mental health stigma & rigid gender roles pervasive in Latinx culture
- Faith fixes everything mentality
- Punished/humiliated for fears & compulsions
- No extended family/friends to help



Young, Latinx, & Undiagnosed

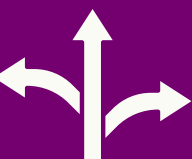


- Undiagnosed for years
 - Hispanic/Latinx higher rates of mental illness & less likely to receive treatment
- Institutionalized involuntarily & misdiagnosed
 - Put in handcuffs
 - Latinx/Hispanics more likely to be incarcerated than whites at rate of 1.4 to 1.
- Frequent homelessness, poverty, & substance use
- Only mental health care accessible low-quality

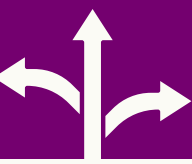


Getting Help

- Found stability and an OCD specialist
- Diagnosed with comorbid Depression & CPTSD
- Committed to treatment & found advocacy
- Began living life vs white-knuckling

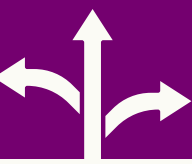
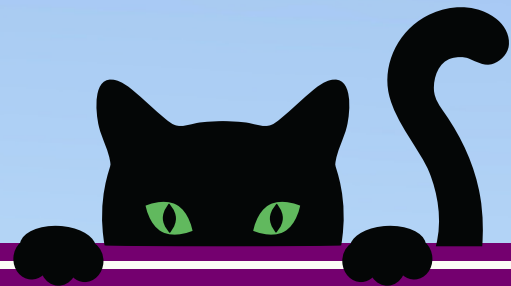


Me & OCD Now





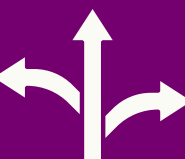
Rachel's Journey



OCD through the years

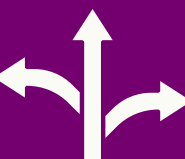


- Symptoms began around age 5 - felt different than everyone else around me
- Parents who are Ph.D. Clinical Psychologists recognized symptoms
- Officially diagnosed with OCD and severe GAD at age 8
- Needed special accommodations at school
- The OCD became severe around age 22



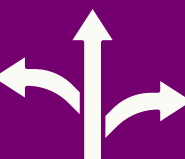
Culture of Judaism and OCD

- Varies for many depending on what part of Judaism they align with and where they're from
 - Some ultra orthodox communities view mental illness as a form of sinfulness
- Was "kicked out" of Jewish sleepaway camp due to having OCD and GAD
- Children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors are at higher risk of developing mental health disorders



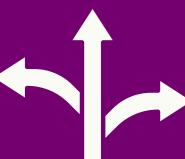
Intergenerational Trauma Stemming from The Holocaust

- Paternal grandparents were Holocaust survivors
- Experiences at Auschwitz and Dachau greatly impacted their views on mental health care
- Everyone refused to face the trauma and instead denied they had problems
- Suppressed feelings/trauma
- Not supportive of my dad becoming a psychologist



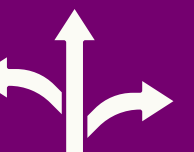
Stigma & Treatment

- Trauma endured impacted the entire family
 - Denial carried through to the next generation
 - Dad denied I was struggling and felt "ashamed" of my OCD
- Dad said "just stop" which delayed seeking treatment
- Therapist in grad school said being raised as a religious Jew caused my OCD
- OCD made me almost quit my new job. Could barely leave my room. I wasn't functioning.

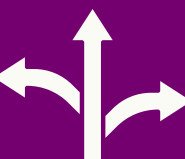


Found a Psychologist who specializes in OCD and ERP...began claiming my life back while working through the OCD despite the stigma associated with it

Working on the side as a Peer Support Specialist/Mentor for Somethings



Val's Journey

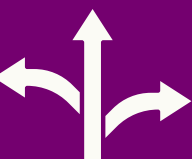


“ It’s Been A Long Days Journey “



You can't live over six decades with OCD, and not have it affect you. Every journey is different and every sufferer's walks their own path. yes, we have many things in common; but the how's, the why's, and the what if's are

very personalized. My OCD has challenged my Christianity, my worthiness, my relationships.. it will attack anything you deem important. This is my unique life's journey









**WE
DEMAND
EQUAL
RIGHTS
NOW!**

**MARCH
FOR
INTEGRATED
SCHOOLS
NOW!**

**WE
DEMAND
DECENT
HOUSING
NOW!**

**WE DEMAND
AN END
TO POLICE
BRUTALITY
NOW!**

**RIGHTS
NOW!**

COLLEGE





**Not perfect!
because of the
skin I'm in 🙄**

Silence
~~the shame~~



White House
4:09 PM ET



VICE PRESIDENT

ARRIVES AT WHITE HOUSE



THE INAUGURATION OF JOE BIDEN







Insecure

Depressed

Abused

Hurt

...

Signature



TM UNTIL THE COLOR OF
YOUR SKIN IS THE TARGET,
YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTANDTM

- ANGELA DAVIS

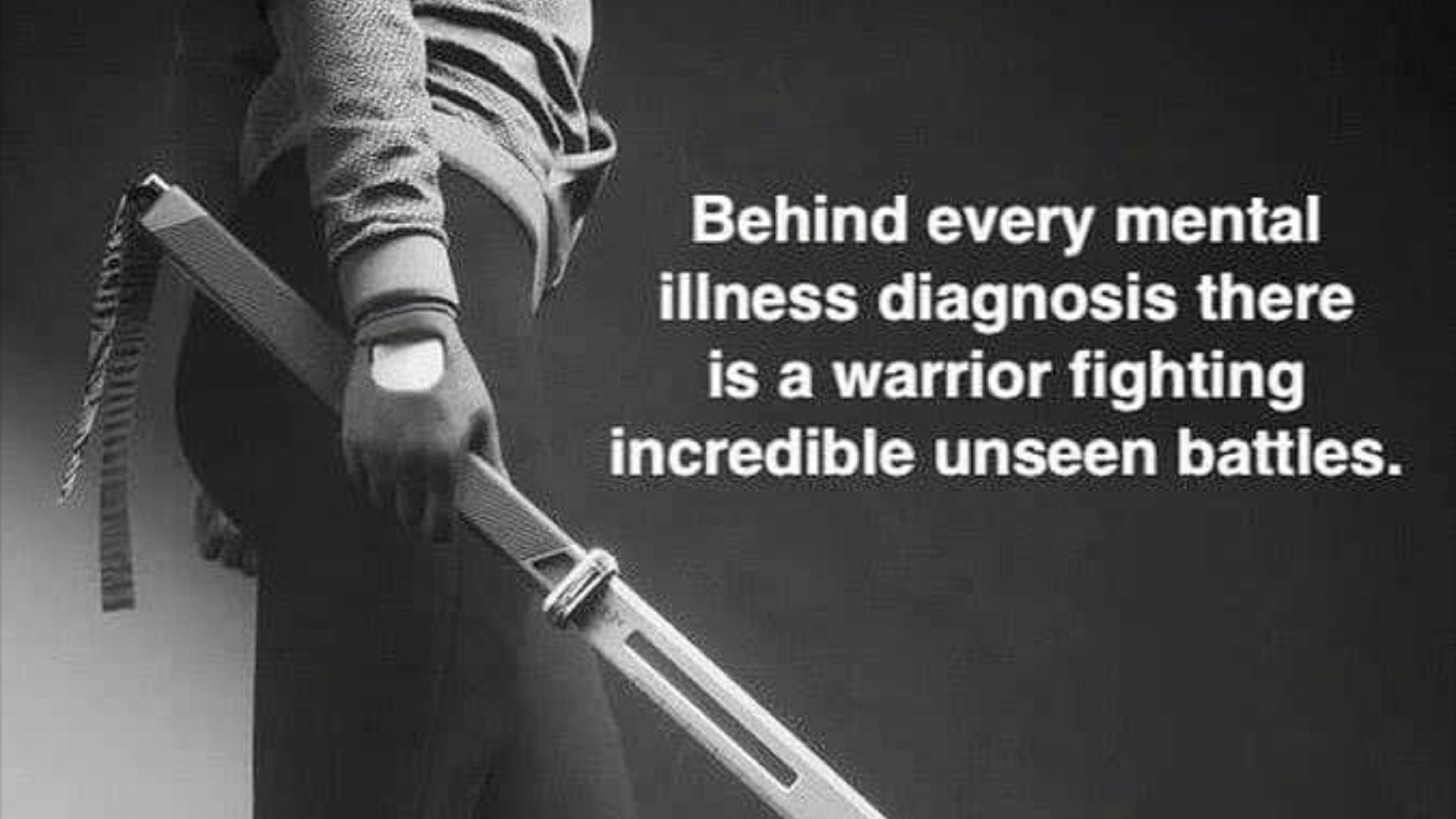


**only understand from their
level of perception.**



“examine what is said, not, who
is speaking.”



A black and white photograph of a person in a military uniform, wearing a beret and a tactical vest, holding a combat knife. The person's hands are visible, and they are wearing a watch on their left wrist. The background is dark and out of focus.

**Behind every mental
illness diagnosis there
is a warrior fighting
incredible unseen battles.**

**OUR PATH MAY BE
DIFFERENT BUT OUR
PURPOSE OF JOURNEY IS
THE SAME**