



WCH Behavioral Health Outpatient Program a

LIFESAVER

"I want people to know about this program," said Jodi. "Without it, I probably would've ended up in the hospital. Or worse. It's a lifesaver." The area resident openly and generously shared her personal journey in order to raise awareness of the difficulties and stigma faced by those experiencing mental illness; and to help spread the word about Wooster Community Hospital's Behavioral Health Outpatient programs.

"I have high blood pressure, so I take medication for that," she said. "If my brain doesn't make enough serotonin, there are medications for that too. Let's erase the stigma of mental illness."

Jodi came to the program with severe depression. "I was absolutely miserable," she shared. "My medications weren't working. I didn't want to hurt myself, yet I didn't care if I lived or died." She explained that the experience of mental illness goes well beyond the physical. "There are the things you keep inside that you think no one understands," said Jodi. "They understand it here [at WCH]."

She described the program as overflowing with kindness from the moment she arrived for her intake appointment. "I was scared, but they were so happy to see me and so kind. They talked with me and not at me. They emanated positivity and hope. I felt safe."

Being treated with respect made a big impact on Jodi. "I battle depression and anxiety," she said. "I wasn't ever judged for that or made to feel less than." She explained that the program teaches positive coping skills that continue to carry her through her days.

Treatment at the Behavioral Health Outpatient Program utilizes both group process and individual counseling. Clinical Manager, Stephanie Freeman, explained that the groups include a lot of experiential, hands-on activities, called adventure therapy. "We have a lot of fun in therapy," said Freeman. "It is a unique aspect of our program." The groups offer participants an opportunity to practice new real life skills and coping mechanisms. Jodi was surprised and delighted by the playfulness of the groups and found it to be a productive and memorable way to discover and learn.

Much care also goes into discharge planning to insure a smooth transition back to work and family. "I was very nervous about returning to my job," said Jodi. "They helped me make a plan."

Statistics gathered by the program based on measurable diagnostic criteria consistently point to a high level of success. "You get individual counseling, group, psychiatry, nursing and family support under one roof," said Brandon Massullo, Director of the Behavioral Health Outpatient Programs.

For Jodi, her experiences with the WCH Behavioral Health Outpatient Program continue to be a big part of her life. "I carry my maintenance plan with me and refer to it when I'm having a bad day."

Additionally, the program brings the participants close in a way that often fosters lasting friendships. Jodi regularly meets some of her fellow group members for coffee. "It's so wonderful to have someone you can talk to who understands what you've been through."

Jodi hopes that sharing her experience may encourage others to seek help. "If just one person reads this and calls, it was worth it," she said. "I love this program. I was seeing only the negative instead of the positive. They helped me to change my mindset and turn that around. I can't stress enough to anyone out there—there is no need to suffer," said Jodi. "You can get help. You just need to be honest, open-minded and willing and this program works. I'm in such a good place now."

Anyone can schedule a no cost intake interview with the Wooster Community Hospital Behavioral Health Outpatient Program; referral from a physician is not necessary.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Patients who completed the treatment programs at Behavioral Health in 2019 reported:

92% reduction in suicidal thoughts

59% reduction in depression

56% reduction in anxiety

70% reduction in repetitive thoughts and behaviors

62% reduction in anger

Contact **WCH Behavioral Health** today for an appointment.
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