



**A Common Struggle: A Personal Journey  
Through the Past and Future of Mental  
Illness and Addiction**  
by Patrick J. Kennedy  
and Stephen Fried



Having worked for many years in the field of addictions, I so related to Patrick Kennedy's story and how confused society remains on mental illness/addiction. He shared feeling "so exposed" (page 95) after he came out in announcing his diagnoses. Rightfully so, he feared people's negative reactions. His experience is so common - people are shamed into silence, which keeps people sick. I enjoyed this book - lengthy - but an easy read.

- Dr. Michele Winchester-Vega, Newburgh. Doctor of social work, assistant professor. Favorite book: *"The Art of Loving"* by Erich Fromm.

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"A Personal Journey Through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction:" - the subtitle of this book announces the particular strength and importance of this memoir by the former congressman, son of the late Senator Ted Kennedy. Growing up Kennedy is always a fascinating subject to many, and this book delivers its share of family lore: gossip, secrets, triumphs and tragedies. It is Patrick Kennedy's voice, however, as he chronicles his lifelong struggle with mental illness and addiction, that makes the book so readable and instructive. The current state of mental health care in our country is poor, by any and all measures. Kennedy describes his mission of a better future for those suffering these common struggles. We are all invited to join in this essential work of destigmatizing these brain illnesses and of insisting that our society do better for all of our families who continue to struggle today to find the help that is so sorely needed. It is my hope that the book will find a wide readership, and so advance the cause of mental health care in our country.

- Jane Carey, Monroe. Social worker. Favorite book: *"The Road Less Traveled"* by M. Scott Peck, M.D.

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Patrick makes a case for recovery-friendly legislative policies - more specifically, affordable health care for both psychological and medical issues. He draws attention to the stigma surrounding those who seek mental health counseling, both professionally and within families. He describes the "power of powerlessness" in a relatable way to any person who self-medicates. For most of Patrick's life, he was "treated medically, not spiritually and emotionally." Patrick attributes his periods of wellness to the fullness of being treated by counseling and medication. Patrick provides a

historical view of the field of counseling and its growing credibility. The community of mental health professions are actively pursuing the most effective strategies to offer to clients. I know that every person I work with hopes to leave with a better sense of control and ability to manage without me. One bit of insight that I hope Patrick delivers to all his readers: that recovery is a lifelong process.

- *Elena Morales, Monroe. Mental health counselor. Favorite book: "Hinds' Feet on High Places" by Hannah Hurnard.*

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This is an excellent read. It takes a look at Patrick Kennedy's personal struggle with addiction and mental illness, and his crusade to change laws and opinions on the treatment of these conditions. These illnesses are often seen as private and shrouded in secrecy, yet 25 percent of Americans are affected by them, and one-third of all hospitalizations have to do with them. Patrick's goal is to shed light on these as brain diseases that would benefit from a one-minded approach. Since there is no cure, the goal is to concentrate on the medical treatment and research instead of focusing on keeping these illnesses a secret. It is sad to me that, as far as we have advanced as a society, we are still prejudiced against mental illness and addiction. We don't talk openly about them and often hear ignorant statements made about them. I am saddened when some of my clients are unwilling to tell their friends, and even family, about their treatment because of fear of ridicule and embarrassment. I fantasize about one day seeing mental health clinics advertised in the same way we see medical centers and cancer treatment centers - when mental health can be looked at with proactive measures instead of reactive ones. And when we recognize the brain as a part of the body that deserves as much, if not more, care and attention than any other part.

- *Victoria Sullivan, Monroe. Clinical social worker. Favorite book: "My Sister's Keeper" by Jodi Picoult.*