

EXPERIENCE—VALERIE KURITA, NEW YORK 'NOT MY SON, NO WAY'

Valerie Kurita determined that mental illness would not dictate her son's future—no matter what the doctors said.

A few years ago, my youngest son, Julian, went off to college. I had the normal concerns of seeing my son off, but was confident that this was an important step in his life. Although Julian didn't practice much while he lived at home, he became so unhappy during his freshman year that he began to practice Buddhism with extreme desperation. I later learned that in his case, this was a symptom of something more serious.

Julian had always been a well-liked, easygoing person. Yet at one point, we became concerned. He was becoming very angry and critical of everyone in our family. I was on the receiving end of hourlong, long-distance telephone harangues. At times, though he insisted otherwise, I thought he was taking drugs because he seemed so unlike the boy we knew. Finally, Julian's roommate (also his young men's leader) and his women's chapter leader told me about the seriousness of his condition. Julian was acting strangely at discussion meetings.

I flew to Madison, Wisc., and brought Julian home to New York. Concerned that he might be a danger to himself and others, we took him to the hospital. Once there, we were horrified to learn that his diagnosis was schizo-affective disorder. To my dismay and disbelief, my son would have to be admitted to the psychiatric ward.

Julian was released from the hospital after about three weeks. There was very little instruction from the doctors about the care of my newly diagnosed mentally ill son. For about one year from the time I brought him home, I was on 24-hour-a-day suicide watch. We live on the 31st floor of a high-rise apartment building with a balcony. Julian was tortured by voices telling him to jump.

I started to read every book I could get my hands on about mental illness. Based on the standard practices of psychiatry in the United States, the outlook was grim. It seemed that Julian would be condemned to a life of revolving medications, underemployment and low expectations. Speaking with many health care professionals, the consensus seemed to be that, other than learning to live with the disease, there was little that could be done.

Members and friends offered support and encouragement for which I was very grateful. However, other than chanting, I knew that they didn't know what to do any more than I did. After recovering from the first shock, I remembered some words from Kaneko Ikeda, wife of SGI President Ikeda, "No matter what happens, never be defeated." I grabbed these words like a lifeline at a time when nothing else made any sense. I also created my own phrase, a little less elegant: "Not my son, no way." I didn't know what to do, so I just prayed to be pointed in the right direction.

I never chanted for any specific treatment to work. I employed what I call "bottom-line prayer." What did I really want in the most basic terms? Once I decided what my "bottom-line" was, I included it every morning in the fourth prayer, without fail. My bottom-line prayer was, and is, for Julian's complete recovery, for him to become absolutely happy and do everything he wants to in life.

I convinced myself that each setback we experienced meant we were getting closer to

our eventual goal. Trusting that my prayer would be answered, I became very intrigued when, in my research, I repeatedly came across the names of Dr. Linus Pauling and Dr. Abram Hoffer, and the term orthomolecular psychiatry. In most books, orthomolecular psychiatry appears on lists of things that don't work. But because President Ikeda has praised the work of Dr. Pauling so frequently, I researched it further.

Briefly, Dr. Hoffer's theory proposes that, in the body of someone with the tendency, there is an overproduction of adrenaline, which then oxidizes into a mescaline-like substance called adrenochrome. This is the chemical that causes the hallucinations, delusions and paranoia that are the hallmarks of schizophrenia. Unfortunately, every doctor that I questioned about orthomolecular psychiatry stated adamantly that it doesn't work and that there is absolutely no clinical evidence to suggest that it does.

However, I recalled that President Ikeda has suggested that orthomolecular medicine is the medicine for the 21st century. Also, President Ikeda has encouraged us to think independently and not be intimidated by authoritarianism, so I decided to find out for myself. In January 2000, Julian and I traveled to Victoria, British Columbia, to see Dr. Hoffer.

The moment we arrived, I knew we were in the right place. Pictures of Dr. Pauling hung in Dr. Hoffer's reception area. When we met him, I sensed he was a very wonderful human being. Dr. Hoffer asked Julian what he would be doing if he hadn't become ill. Julian, sleeping and drooling, roused himself long enough to say, "I'd be finishing college and starting my career." Dr. Hoffer, calmly and confidently stated: "Julian, keep making your plans. You're going to be able to do everything you want to do in life." He offered the first hopeful words we had heard and were nearly identical to my bottom-line prayer.

Dr. Hoffer explained that megadoses of vitamin C, niacinamide and salmon oil would slowly bring Julian's body chemistry back into balance. As the illness is brought under control, the psychiatric medicine can gradually be reduced to nothing, or to so little that the side effects are insignificant. The most important ingredients would be consistency and patience.

Julian's improvement has progressed exactly as Dr. Hoffer predicted. Dr. Hoffer was not surprised in the least. I am so proud of Julian and the heroic struggle he has waged. He scrupulously followed every treatment program I put him through, including the one that is finally working. Whenever he was able, he challenged himself to do gongyo and chant. Even if Julian never gets any better than he is right now, I know that he can live a productive and fulfilling life. However, I have complete confidence that he will put the final touches on his recovery and accomplish everything that he wishes, including his mission for world peace. I'm very appreciative of my husband and oldest son, Andy, who supported us 100 percent, and I offer my respect and apologize to my daughter, Lizzie, for all the turmoil she's endured during her sensitive teenage years.

I am especially grateful to President Ikeda. I recently purchased the book *A Lifelong Quest for Peace*, which is a dialogue between Dr. Pauling and President Ikeda, published in 1992. I was stunned to find that, on pages 48 and 53, Dr. Pauling mentions Dr. Abram Hoffer, the doctor we tracked down after more than a year of chanting and research. Dr. Pauling mentions here that it was actually Dr. Hoffer's use of megadoses of vitamins in the treatment of schizophrenia that was his inspiration to start his vitamin C research. This book serves as additional evidence to me of the effort that President Ikeda has long been making to educate us to become people who can help ourselves and many others in the process.