

Podcast – Experience Speaks: A Parents Voice on their Mental Health Journey

Interviewer: Tanya Kelly – CPRI, Program Support Manager

Interviewee: Tina – Parent of former CPRI Youth Resident

The following podcast is part of the Children’s Mental Health Week series released by CPRI in London, Ontario for the Week of May 2-6. CPRI – the Child and Parent Resource Institute provides highly specialized assessment and treatment services to children and youth with complex mental health/developmental disabilities. The education and learning services at CPRI supports evidence informed learning for individuals and organizations working in child and youth mental health and developmental services with the goal to improve the lives on Ontario’s children and youth. Children’s mental health week is a provincial initiative aimed at increasing awareness of mental health issues faced by today’s children and youth and decreasing the stigma that may exist. In addition, it is an information sharing initiative to show that treatment can work and there are always possibilities and opportunities to explore. There is always hope and always support.

Disclaimer: Please note this podcast series is not intended to be medical advice and all medical concerns and questions should be directed to the appropriate health care professionals.

Introduction: Today’s topic is Experience Speaks: A Parents Voice on their Mental Health Journey. Tanya Kelly is a Program Support Manager for the Education and Learning Services Department at CPRI. She will be interviewing Tina a parent of an Ontario youth with mental health challenges.

Interviewer: Hi Tina thank you for joining us today ***could you please tell us about your journey of discovering your child had mental health concerns?***

Interviewee: Sure we adopted our son in 2002 when he was three and a half, that September we put him in junior kindergarten and the very first day we got a phone call that he had smacked another child upside the head with a block and that was the start. We knew that he was a very busy child but he seemed to be compelled to do things that he wasn’t supposed to. He would do things over and over and over again. It got to the point where we were having a lot of difficulty at home and school and so we sought support through our local children’s treatment centre. Unfortunately, information about things like Tourette’s and OCD in children hadn’t reached them

yet and this was back in 2002 so there wasn't a lot of information. We noticed that our son kept doing certain mannerisms over and over again and I started to do some research and I stumbled upon Dr. Duncan McKinlay's website 'Life's a Twitch' and it had information about the CPRI Brake Shop and so I approached our local children's treatment centre about going to the Brake Shop to get more help. We made the referral and we were seen in 2006 when he was seven years old. We walked away that day with a treatment plan and with diagnosis of ADHD, Tourette's and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that Tina. Children's Mental Health Week is a provincial awareness campaign intended to reduce stigma and increase awareness surrounding children's mental health concerns. *Could you tell us about a challenge your child has experienced due to their mental health condition?*

Interviewee: Yes in 2010 when he was 11 years old Corbin experienced a crisis that we weren't sure where it was coming from but he was doing things like running away from home, hearing voices, not being able to stay at school. It was really he was breaking down we were not sure what was happening. Again, we approached our local children's centre they had a very punitive way of dealing with his behaviours which was unfortunate because what we experienced from CPRI was very positive behavioural supports like collaborative problem solving but we could not get our community to buy into those things yet and so that was extremely difficult for Corbin he had a very rough time and still talks about the many traumas he experienced because of people not knowing better.

Interviewer: What were some of the ways in which your opinions and individual needs were reflected in your child's treatment plan?

Interviewee: The very first day we came to CPRI we met with Dr. McKinlay and he made a treatment plan right with us in the office and it addressed every concern we had including that we didn't have a pediatrician for Corbin so a referral was made for a developmental pediatrician who was key in his treatment for the next several years. His plan focused on the services that he would receive rather than the negative behaviours he presented with.

Interviewer: *What are some of the most helpful coping strategies you had learned which you would like to share with other youth or with other parents and families that would be listening today?*

Interviewee: I think key for us was collaborative problem solving, Dr. Ross Greene

his book “Lost at School” was really key for us when we were dealing with his school. Once he returned he had a residential placement here at CPRI and when he had his breakdown and so when he returned to school I approached the school with the information about collaborative problem solving.

Interviewer: *As a caregiver how do you find ways to take care of yourself so you are able to be an advocate and support to your child?*

Interviewee: I didn't for a very long time and I also work in the field of early intervention and one of the things we tell parents all the time is that you need to take care of yourself and I would just roll my eyes and say “yeah, when am I going to get time to take care of myself”. I was doing things like holding the door while he had a three hour tantrum so where was I going to get time for myself? I couldn't even find anybody to look after him. But it took me basically having my own breakdown to realize that my mental health was just as important as his and in fact more so, kind of like when you are on an airplane and they tell you to put on your own oxygen mask first before you put on your child's. If you are drowning you can't do anything to help your child so I think that for me I have discovered that I like to scrapbook, I like to hang out with some friends – very low key kind of things to get away. I also turn off my cell phone and I know that my husband will take care of it or if he is with my friend that she will take care of the situation and I don't have to worry about it.

Interviewer: Great, thank you. Those were some great strategies. I understand that you belong to a Family Advisory Committee supporting child and youth care planning here at CPRI and in the broader community. *Can you tell us more about this committee and how our listeners can get involved?*

Interviewee: Sure, it's a committee – a parent advisory committee and it is comprised right now of all parents of current and past clients of CPRI. It is also open to people who themselves were clients of CPRI. We just started meeting and we've just come out with our terms of reference and set up our meetings for the year. It is basically to provide insight and information to senior management at CPRI so that we can effect some change in a family in a positive family way.

Interviewer: Great, thank you. *Is there anything else that would like to share with the families, care giving teams and children and youth that would be listening today?*

Interviewee: Basically that they are not alone. I think it's really important that they

realize that there are lots of kids and families out there that are very much like theirs and know that CPRI's website - cpri.ca, is an awesome way of getting information, even if you are waiting for services there is lots of information there.

Interviewer: Great, thank you very much Tina.

Thank you for listening to this podcast provided by CPRI. Be sure to check out Childrensmentalhealthweek.ca for more resources.