



Mental Health Association

in Orange County, Inc.

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KATE SPADE AND ANTHONY BOURDAIN'S TRAGIC AND UNTIMELY DEATH

Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain's tragic and untimely deaths have sent shock waves through our community, state, nation and the world.

These losses remind us that anyone, anywhere, can be affected by severe mental health problems, no matter how incredibly talented and successful they are. It is all the more heartbreaking that these celebrities who brought joy to millions around the world could not find peace within themselves.

Furthermore, it reminds us that mental illnesses are all-too-often serious and life-threatening chronic diseases. Mental illnesses — especially serious ones — rob us of our health and well-being. They present daily challenges that can sometimes overwhelm us. No one is immune to them. And no matter how many resources one has, one may not access care primarily due to stigma. Moreover, not all who seek treatment may be able to overcome their brain disease. This does not mean that we shouldn't try. Despite their condition, these individuals appear to have lived and worked productively for many years. They contributed positively to their community, society, and the world. They received accolades that many would envy.

But, they also battled for their health. Recent reports state that they sought out care and support from family, friends, and health professionals. And for a very long time, they won more battles with their disease than they lost.

Regrettably, 90 percent of all people who complete suicide suffer from depression. This is one of those shocking statistics that only seem to come to the forefront when someone famous completes suicide.

Here is the stark reality — 1 in 4 people in the United States has a mental illness. If you add family and friends, we are all directly or indirectly impacted by the illness. As common as it is, people are still afraid to talk about it for fear of being stigmatized. We have to get over the stigma and discrimination or else it will continue to fester and result in people refusing to seek treatment or prescribing their own course of treatment (such as medicating with alcohol and/or drugs).

In order for all of us to survive, it is imperative to have hope. We must not lose sight that, contrary to the tide of public opinion, mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character, or poor upbringing. Mental illnesses are treatable. This means that many people who have a mental illness, and are treated, recover well or even completely. What mental illness needs is more sunlight, truthfulness, and unashamed conversation.

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While Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain inspired us with their accomplishments, their lives should inspire us all in so many other ways. It should inspire us to speak out against the stigma and discrimination so many with serious mental illnesses face, and instead see them for their strengths. It should inspire us to identify our needs and seek help at the earliest stages of any disease process. It should inspire us to fight for our overall health and well-being every day of our lives, even in the face of great challenges. And it should inspire us to believe that no matter how difficult those challenges may be, we can still work toward recovery.

It is important to remember that Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. offers a variety of services that can help. **Helpline (1-800-832-1200/845-346-HELP)** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year providing crisis intervention, information and referrals. In addition, **Text 4 Teens (845-391-1000)** provides teens with a confidential text line for information, referral and support; Monday-Thursday 4pm-10pm, Friday 4pm-12am and Saturday and Sunday 5pm-12am. Visit our website at: www.mhaorangeny.com for a listing of our programs.

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Mental Health Association in Orange County is a proud member of WELCOME Orange... Helping individuals achieve recovery, resiliency and self-determination.