

Video Guide

FULL OF SOUND AND FURY: LZVZNG WZTH SCHIZOPHRENIA

50 minutes, color, 1985

Most of us have had sufficient experiences with depression to understand it. Schizophrenia is a different matter. Mark Vonnegut wrote a book entitled *The Eden Express* (1975) in which he describes his own experience with schizophrenia.

“Small tasks become incredibly intricate and complex. It started with pruning the fruit trees. One saw cut would take forever. I was completely absorbed in the sawdust floating gently to the ground, the feel of the saw in my hand, the incredible patterns in the bark, the muscles in my arm pulling back and then pushing forward. Everything stretched infinitely in all directions. Suddenly it seemed as if everything was slowing down and I would never finish sawing the limb. Then, by some miracle that branch would be done and I’d have to rest, completely blown out. The same thing kept happening over and over, then I found myself being unable to stick with any one tree. I’d take a branch here, a couple there. It seemed I had been working for hours and hours but the sun hadn’t moved at all.

“I began to wonder if I was hurting the trees and found myself apologizing. Each tree began to take on personality. I began to wonder if any of them liked me . . . (p. 88).

“The pages and words (while reading) would twist and blur in the really gruesome spots. I had to stop and catch my breath after every two or three pages. The closer I got to the end the worse it became. I was convinced that I really shouldn’t finish the book, that if I did I would die or the world would end or worse.

Schizophrenia is the most elusive mental illness. Schizophrenics suffer from a variety of debilitating symptoms including delusions, hallucinations, social difficulties, and gaps of feeling between self and the world. Perceptions are often distorted which makes normal functioning of everyday life difficult. There is currently no cure for this chronic, life long disease.

Schizophrenia is not the same as multiple personality. The split in schizophrenia is between feelings and thought whereas in the multiple personality disorder the personality is split into different parts. New techniques of drug and social therapy, however, have been useful for 85 % of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. One-third have one episode and get better; one-third never recover; and one-third have periods when they can function. Some do better than just get by. *Full of Sound and Fury* depicts three cases of individuals suffering from schizophrenia. Interview notes have been consolidated in this video guide.

Sve (Interview)

Sve is tormented with agony and fear. He feels he is out of his mind. His emotions and memories are dead, and his responses and views for the last 30 years have been those of a 12 year old boy. His body and mind feel in flames and irritated. He suffers physical torment. He is unable to communicate with anyone. He has been friendless for 30 years. He classifies himself as a vegetable because he is not productive. He craves to do something worthwhile and big; he dramatizes his loneliness and suffering and he gets grandiose ideas. He writes about the big mistake God made in making humans because Sve is one of those mistakes.

Sve states, "Life is but a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing! " This is Sve's experience of life.

Notes :

Sandy

Sandy describes schizophrenia as sensational with extreme highs and lows. Casual everyday little problems are a monumental struggle. When she is psychotic, she has no feeling in her body and feels her soul is disembodied. During psychosis she can become caught up in the fantasy of fairy kings and illusionary people; she cannot distinguish if real people are around. Her delusions feel so real. She believed she was Peter Rabbit and during this time she would only eat rabbit food. She has thought she had magical powers to make individuals disappear. She has been Michael the Arch Angel with powers to heal people. On occasion she has felt as if she had electricity floating through her body which would kill people if out of control. She has believed herself evil and compulsively felt she should be punished. One hallucination she experienced as a form of punishment was a swarm of bees landing on her body and stinging her. She could feel the pain. Her delusions can be very frightening.

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Mitch (Interview with Mitch's mother)

Mitch was tormented with voices, delusions, and hallucinations. His mother stated that at 16 living with Mitch was nearly impossible. He suffered an inability to follow through on anything and every experience was like a new one. He couldn't remember to take out the garbage. He seldom went to school; yet got 95 % on his exams. He slept all day. He became very self-absorbed. When he got a friend, he would think nothing of calling them 25 times per day until the friend could no longer tolerate it. When the friend said the relationship was too intense and backed off, Mitch would feel extremely rejected.

He turned to Jesus, God, Satan, Buddhism, and Zen trying to find answers to his torment. At one point, he struggled with whether or not he was the Messiah, debating it back and forth in his head and with anyone who would listen. As he got older, he started communicating with the voice he heard from his head on the telephone. He could no longer hide his symptoms. He showed his pain through paintings, sculptures and drawings.

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