Where the Psychic Meets Mental Illness.

I had an interesting experience the other day that is something all of us in the paranormal field might benefit by being aware of. Someone got a hold of me regarding their psychic and other paranormal experiences of late. This person’s description of the experiences kept expanding and became somewhat incoherent as they went rambling in a variety of directions. Then the person said that they were on medication for some mental health issues. Some of the issues sounded like they could possibly be confused with the “psychic” experiences that were claimed.

As most people who investigate the paranormal will tell you, there is a very real need to determine if any physical and mental health issues as well as any medication or other substance use might be part of the perceived paranormal phenomena. This is also true with those of us working with people and their psychic abilities.

For many of us, the desire to help is strong and we can easily get caught up in the “I want to help” mode and quickly get over our heads. And, to be perfectly honest, our egos can also kick in with the ideas of “I can do this” and “I know how to fix it all”. We might attempt to determine just what part of the person’s experience is mental illness and what is true psychic ability. We can easily delude ourselves into thinking that we really can tell. Well, in most of our cases, that’s simply not true. Not only are we not mental health professionals, but we can easily start misinterpreting what we think we are picking up from the person psychically as we attempt to read what they are seeing.

The situation can become even more complicated when the person asking for confirmation of their psychic abilities starts saying things such as maybe the mental illness isn’t real, and the diagnosis is based on people not understanding that their experiences are actually psychic in nature. This person not only voiced that possibility, but also the idea that stopping their medication might increase their abilities and doing so would put them in a more “normal” state.

I struggled with this for a bit. I’ve personally had friends with similar mental health issues, and have done professional work wearing a very different hat with mental health advocacy organizations. I know that there could be some truth to what this person was saying – to some degree at least. I also have read theories from people channeling entities from other realms claiming that mental illness is often simply a case of someone visiting another realm and getting stuck there.

The difficulty is, these are theories. And they are made by people without the deeper understanding of the medical aspects of mental illness. When we work with people in this state, we need to be aware that the advice or comments we make can really put them in a life of death situation, especially if we promote the idea, or give them something they can take as us supporting the idea, that they are psychic, not mentally ill. Even if we are able to correctly determine the situation part of the time, the times we are wrong can be catastrophic.

What’s my opinion? I rarely see things as one way or the other. I’m not usually a believer that the world is black and white. I experience life in this realm and others as shades of grey and Technicolor for the most part. I think it’s possible that there can be a combination of health issues and psychic abilities in the person. But, as tempting as it might be to help them bring out the psychic, I just don’t have the back ground and expertise to work with the full spectrum of the issues, and working with only a small part, could have devastating consequences on the whole.

Even if we successfully work on developing the psychic abilities in the person, if they have mental health issues, the increase in psychic experiences can further complicate their perception of reality and ability to function. In this case, I told the person that I was sorry, but just didn’t have the expertise to work with them, and encouraged them to continue talking to their physicians. I didn’t recommend them to anyone else, as this would simply be passing the issue on to another person, and this is probably the same course of action I’ll take the next time the issue arises.

By the way, this conversation was strictly by email, so there is a written record incase false claims are made. This method of communication also allowed me to take time to answer in a way I was comfortable with after some thought.

Always remember though that the person reaching out to us is a fellow human being and deserves to be treated with respect. Mental illness is exactly that – an illness, and the person with the condition is not responsible for having it. It is not a moral condition or life style choice, but something beyond that person’s control. It is not up to us to judge or criticize or in any way make fun of the person or their situation.