

# Success Stories



Think Recovery is a collaboration effort between the Mississippi Peer Support Specialist Network and the Mississippi Department of Mental Health.

Life is filled with so many daily stressors especially when you have a child with mental health disorders or behavioral challenges. Most people believe that mental health disorders are rare and happen to someone else, but I can stand before you and say that mental health does not discriminate. It can happen to anyone. In fact, it happened to both of my sons. My sons, ages 11 and 18, were both diagnosed with some severe emotional, physical, and mental health disorders.

My journey as a parent has been both challenging and rewarding whether at home or at school. Every day I was receiving phone calls from my son's teacher telling me that I needed to come to the school to pick him up because she couldn't teach him. He would come home everyday feeling sick and depressed because of what he had endured at school during the day. Due to the demands of attending to my son's needs, I eventually lost my job in 2009. I was devastated and angry. But I knew it was God's way of showing me that my children needed me more.

I was tired of fighting a battle with the school and teachers that I thought I couldn't win. I wasn't going to give up but at the same time I didn't know what else to do until someone referred me to MS Families as Allies for Children's Mental Health. I met with an advocate who began to advocate for my son. She went to several meetings with me at the school and we were finally getting somewhere. Sooner rather than later, an Individualized Educational Plan and a Functional Behavioral Assessment were established and put in place for my youngest child. He was at serious risk of failing. As a parent, I had to educate the teachers about my children's disorders as well as provide school staff with information, knowledge, and brochures.

I realized just how important my sons and their mental health were and still are to me. What has helped me with my transition is that I never went into denial about their diagnoses. I accepted it and said "It is what it is." Now, what was I going to do to help them was my next question. Today both of my sons are doing well. My 11 year old ended his 5th grade with an overall B overage in all of his classes. He has even earned a 1st degree Black Belt in karate. He plays football where he holds four different positions as running back, wide receiver, safety and quarterback. My oldest son plays basketball. He played in the band for seven years. He even earned a 3rd degree black belt in karate and became an instructor. He passed all of his classes and graduated in May 2012 with a high school diploma. He is attending Holmes Community College majoring in Drafting & Design Technology.

It is very important for parents to educate themselves for the benefit of not only their children, but others as well. When we advocate, we empower ourselves to gain what is best for the little voices that can't be heard. After all, children and youth are people too, no matter what mental health disorders or behavioral challenges they may have. They just want to be loved and accepted for who they are and not for what they have.

~Tara Manning

**RECOVERY:** A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.