

# Update as of January, 2021



It is my prayer that the workshop on mental health struggles was a blessing to you. I can't stress enough that you are NOT alone in this battle, and I hope you will reach out for local support.

The original workshop was offered in 2017. In the years since, the James family has faced more diagnoses that affect both school and family life. In the group of eight children pictured here, there are four cases of bipolar disorder, plus numerous cases of severe anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and ADHD. In reality, every one of my children has now received a diagnosis of some type of mental or emotional disorder.

In the light of additional issues, how does this change the original workshop? It doesn't. The primary message of this workshop is that your children need your unconditional love more than anything else. Here are a few things I most want you to remember:

- Your child needs constant reassurance that they are deeply loved and that you will always be there for them.
- Your child needs to see that you are their champion, no matter what.
- Your child needs rest. Watch for signs that schoolwork or other activities are getting to be too much. Do not be afraid to set an unusual schedule according to your child's needs.
- Schoolwork is important. Chores are important. But nothing is more important than your child's well-being and safety. Give grace.
- The teen years are often the most difficult. Focus on teaching your teen about their disorder/diagnosis, triggers and warning signs, and self-care. Spending time on that now will serve your child well in life beyond their teens. The time you spend teaching these things now will offer your child a much greater chance of success later in life.

May God richly bless you and your family, and give you strength and courage for your battle.

With much love,  
The James Family

Personal updates on the three daughters who shared their stories with you.



Laura is currently working on an associate's degree in studio art. She holds a 4.0 GPA. The girl I feared would never turn 18 will turn 30 this year. She wants to apply to the University of Texas after finishing the associate's degree. After some very scary times, she was finally diagnosed with bipolar disorder, on top of the previous diagnoses of anxiety, depression, and OCD. This new diagnosis brought with it a medication prescription that was totally life-changing. The moral of the story is - NEVER stop seeking answers.



This is my beautiful Sarah in her wedding dress. Her husband is a precious man who loves my daughter perfectly. Sarah continues to work with children, currently serving as a nanny. They are beginning to make plans for their future, including buying a house and starting a family. Sarah has also received an additional diagnosis. She is being treated for narcolepsy and learning to manage symptoms and medication, especially as they affect her other diagnoses.



Rachel is as fierce an advocate for mental health as ever. As she continues to fight her own battles against bipolar disorder, anxiety, depression, and an eating disorder, she has the added battle of physical issues, including autoimmune disorders. She did finally receive that ADHD diagnosis and is medicated for it. In spite of her limitations, she fights for her health so she can continue to do what she loves - working with children. She is currently an early education teacher at a daycare center. (And yes, she still loves to experiment wildly with her hairstyle. LOL)

Never give up on your children.

Be their biggest advocate and their biggest fan.

There is always reason to hope.

