

Hospital where I found my mental reset button

ONE of the many things I already miss about being at Denmar Specialist Psychiatric Hospital is Sister Portia and how she never sugar-coats the truth.

So, every Sunday at 9.30am, we had a meeting to address the challenges and progress of the sister-patient relationships in our male ward.

We talked about the lack of hot water, the noise, how nice some nurses, sisters or matrons were, and how the likes of Kabelo would always delay taking their medication at night.

Trust me, I had every right to delay taking my meds. They literally knocked me out in no more than 20 minutes. That is how hectic those legal drugs would deal with me. To this day, I appreciate the long beautiful sleep they granted me every night without fail, 9-10 hours of uninterrupted sleep.

There I go digressing. Let me get back to tell you about the amazing lessons from the sister at the hospital.

Sister Portia would then go into rela-

tionship advice mode.

“Gentlemen, this is a hospital, not Date My Family or All You Need is Love. All of you here are admitted to get psychological help, and not to find love disguised in a mental illness or disorder.”

At this point, we are all quiet.

We are thinking of the teen girl or boy, or the guy and lady who are here because their marriages are falling apart and they are brought closer by their common pain. We look at each other and nod our heads in agreement to what she is saying.

She would say this softly: “Psychiatric medicine is expensive. You alone, you must part ways with R1 000 monthly, depending on the period your psychologist has put you on medication. Mind you, it varies, it can be six months, 12 months or even 18 months. Now you want to take a girlfriend here and add another R1 000 for her medication.”

Her voice gets more assertive and firm: “You two could make a child, and the most likelihood is this; that child too will be born with another mental disorder.

THE K-WORD KABELO CHABALALA



Denmar tackled my depression, restored order in my life

That is unnecessary financial burden. So, before you buy food or anything, you have to part ways with R3 000, monthly. That is a lot of money”

She is absolutely spot on.

For example, you have dementia, your newfound girlfriend has got OCD, and the child comes with ADHD. That is a disaster.

She repeated these words several times: “A psychiatric hospital is not a place where you fall in love. Go to a funeral, hide under a lady’s umbrella and take her number. If you all hit it off, you can marry her, but not here.”

She further said: “Let me tell you, most if not all the relationships that start here, the people come back here, they come back here with more deficient disorders than when they got here for the first time.”

We all laughed, but in the humorous and yet serious manner Sister Portia relayed the message, there were so many truths wrapped in her voice.

We should go beyond checking whether

he has a car or whether she is financially independent. There are non-visible and yet expensive things like mental conditions that people are suffering from. We will not detect them from just having a casual conversation with someone.

It is important that we also ask about a person’s mental condition history as well as their financial history, genetical history, emotional history, all the histories you can think of. Mental disorders are real. Depression is real, and it will never be written on anyone’s face. So, take full charge and responsibility of your future.

I don’t remember having such a great time in my life. Denmar Hospital was that peaceful and harmonious place for me. I found my mental reset button there.

Don’t forget 0800 12 13 14 – the helpline for the SA Depression and Anxiety Group. It will help us all get some order in our lives.

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