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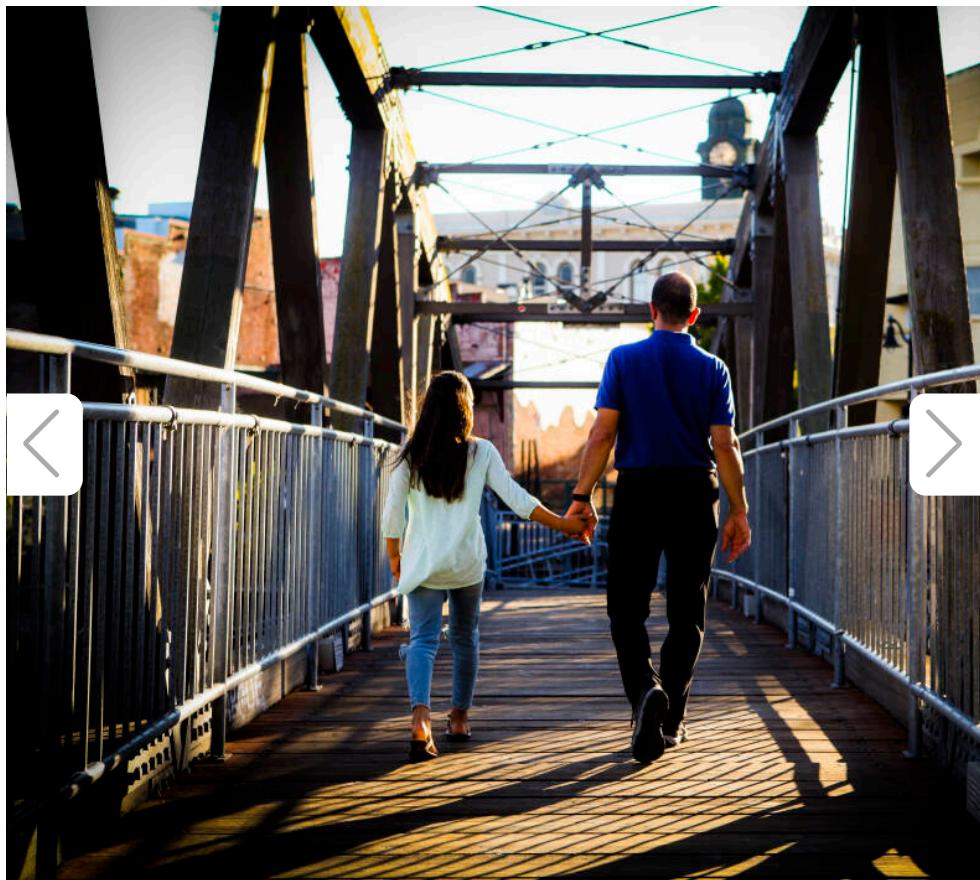
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# War survivor: Poor treatment led to hospitalization



**SLIDE 1 OF 2**

LP walks with his daughter in downtown Petaluma on Friday, Sept. 23, 2022. (CRISSY PASCUAL/Argus-Courier Staff)

**AMELIA PARREIRA**

ARGUS-COURIER STAFF

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Shortly after coming to the United States more than 20 years ago to escape his war-torn home in the Middle East, a local engineer began experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety, which he said stemmed from deep feelings of survivor's guilt.

"Typically when I hear about war breaking out or getting worse in the news, that used to hit me very hard, it used to affect me," said the Petaluma resident, who asked that he be referred to as L.P. in an interview with the Argus-Courier.

"I didn't know how to deal with the feelings of powerlessness, as we're powerless to change current events or geopolitical events."

Finally those feelings of powerlessness became so strong that the only way L.P. knew how to channel them was through alcohol and drug use, which turned into addiction. But he was able to get help to treat that addiction after attending a clinical study in his late 20s, when a doctor diagnosed him as suffering from depression and helped point him in a better direction.

Fast forward to 2015, and L.P. was receiving care from Kaiser Permanente's psychiatric department, which had prescribed him two medications to treat his depression. But, L.P. said, after expressing to his psychiatrist that one of the medications was giving him unwanted side effects, his psychiatrist took him off the medicine abruptly.

L.P. soon found himself in a state of mania, which he said only added to his trauma.

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"I could have landed in jail," he said. "Not that I was trying to hurt anybody, but could have landed in jail."

Instead he found himself hospitalized for about four days at the Aurora Behavioral Healthcare Center, a residential treatment and mental health services facility in Santa Rosa affiliated with Kaiser.

"It was my second time being hospitalized, and it was neither bad nor excellent," L.P. said. "It was good where it got me stabilized. I got back to my job without losing my job. That could have been a negative repercussion, so that was a big deal."

"However, I ended up going from two medications (to being on) four medications after those four days, because they wanted to stabilize me and so they did," he added. "I'm grateful for all that, but it's not the direction I wanted to go in, and I certainly didn't want to have that experience where things got out of control for me and just had a crisis."

L.P. said he is very grateful for all Kaiser has done to care for him, but he feels the healthcare provider could have done better to prevent his manic episode and hospitalization.

"They lead the way in a lot of physical healthcare and a lot of different procedures and a lot of things they're able to do that I've benefited from. But in the mental healthcare side they don't seem to want to hear too much of the patient's story," L.P. said, adding that Kaiser's lack of staff and resources seem to contribute to a lack of connection between mental health doctors and the patient.

"I suppose they could have given my situation more consideration. They could have given my case more thought. But I subjectively feel like my impression was that my psychiatrist had a very limited amount of time to take input, research and provide a medication change."

In a Sept. 21 emailed statement, Kaiser Permanente addressed its recent surge in demand for mental health services even as the provider's mental health workers went on strike.

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"All communities and health care providers, not only Kaiser Permanente, are massively affected by the crisis created by the surge in demand for mental health care in our county and across the country, combined with workforce shortages," Kaiser said in the statement. "It will take all of us collaborating and working together on solutions that meet the mental health needs of our communities."

Kaiser added that, while more than 90 percent of its received patient surveys express high ratings for the provider, any time it hears of negative experiences it acts as a reminder for the provider to improve.

"We believe mental health care is just as important as physical health care and we work tirelessly to ensure our patients get the total health care they need," Kaiser said in its statement.

Since his experience eight years ago, L.P. said life for him has improved immensely, and attributes much of his breakthrough to the love and support his wife has offered throughout the years. And as he continues medication for his depression, he hopes to see the stigma around mental health fade into the background, and for mental wellness to become a normalized part of life and healthcare.

"I'm very fortunate, and I think that my case is proof that mental health can improve," L.P. said. "At the same time I'm very aware that the crisis I had in 2014-15 could have been worse and I could have lost a lot. So mental health is way too important to be neglected."

During his interview, L.P. cited the importance of support groups and similar programs for those experiencing situations like his or experiencing other mental health challenges. A list of such programs in Sonoma County can be found [here](#).

*This story is part of an ongoing series on mental health care.*

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