

Bill Rea ? The Princes are doing their bit

I know this is going to be a hard one to write, yet I think think the topic is an important one.

It deals with mental illness.

This is a topic that touches just about all of us. Either we are dealing with issues ourselves, or someone in our immediate circle is, be it depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I have people close to me dealing, or who have dealt, with both issues. Thus, the matter strikes home.

Do we also consider addiction a mental illness? I'm sure most of us have seen examples of that too.

This column was inspired by two brothers, one of whom will probably be King one of these days.

Prince William and Lady Gaga have teamed up for a video aimed at increasing awareness of mental health issues. I have seen it, and the pair of them do a very good job of bringing the topic up front. They are effective at making their good points without letting their individual celebrity status get in the way and overwhelm the message.

I hadn't been aware of this, but Lady Gaga has been living with PTSD since she was sexually assaulted about 12 years ago.

?I should be so happy, but you can't help it when in the morning you wake up, you are so tired, you are so sad, you are so full of anxiety and the shakes that you can't barely think,? Lady Gaga was quoted telling the Prince.

These are stories that absolutely need telling.

The other story that inspired this piece involved William's brother, Prince Harry.

There were accounts of the counselling Harry took in his efforts to deal with the death of his mother almost 20 years ago.

He recently gave an interview with a British newspaper, in which he spoke about the ?total chaos? he experienced after losing his mother, and the problems caused by bottling up his emotions rather than talking about them.

?I can safely say that losing my mum at the age of 12 and therefore shutting down all of my emotions for the last 20 years has had a quite serious effect on not only my personal life but also my work as well,? he was quoted as saying.

Princess Diana's death was a major talking point throughout the world, with many fingers of blame being pointed at the Royal Family in general, and Prince Charles in particular. I well remember those sentiments being expressed, and well remember the anger I felt at the trashing that went on.

Prince Charles might not have been the perfect husband, but who among us is? Let any married man out there reading these words step forward if he can call himself the perfect husband. Even I'm not prepared to do that.

But in the middle of all that trashing, I think too many people forgot about the impact on William and Harry. They had lost their mother in a horrific crash. True, they are not the only boys to have had to go through such an experience. It, alas, happens a lot more frequently than we would like to think about. But these two had to endure the ordeal with the whole world watching, while also hearing numerous cheap shots being taken at their father and grandmother, among others.

There was a time when very few people would talk about mental illness, or only did because they had to.

But we are hearing more about the issue now, although there is a lot more progress that has to be made. We're still hearing too many stories about people trying to cope with problems like this, and sometimes they just can't cope.

It's great to see William and Harry stepping up to try and spread the word. There are many in this world who think their positions, as part of the Royal Family, is obsolete. That debate can wait for another time. But I don't think there's any denying they are both taking their celebrity status and putting it to good use. Like I stated above, there is still a lot to do, but these two princes are certainly making a contribution.

Good on them.

