

Natasha Mitchell: Hello, it's All in the Mind on ABC Radio National. Guess who this is? Glenn Close: I actually come from a family of neuroscientists by marriage but I kind of feel smarter because I'm now related to them. I love what you all do, I really do and it's all because of Dr Brad Corson, my Biol 101 professor at the College of William and Mary. Back in 1970 he would have us all on the edge of our seats talking about the mighty mitochondria, the powerhouses of the cell, and I know it's not brain stuff but it was exciting, he'd go deeper and deeper talking about the latest research and then he'd say, 'That's all we know.' And we'd go, 'No, no, don't stop there, give me a lab coat I need to know more.' Then there was chemistry class. Now I know I'm speaking to a lot of left-brain linear-thinking fierce geniuses, so you'll never be able to comprehend the acuteness of my particular agony in chemistry class. Suffice it to say I became an actress. Natasha Mitchell: Got it yet? No?. Here's another hint. [101 Dalmations and Fatal Attraction audio clips...] It's the extraordinary actor Glenn Close strutting her stuff on screen as the vixen Cruella De Vil in 101 Dalmatians, and as Alex in that 80s schlocker Fatal Attraction. But off-screen Glenn has recently turned her attention closer to home, with a campaign called BringChange2Mind. It's focusing on combating the stigma surrounding mental illness. And I say closer to home because Glenn's sister Jessie Close lives with bipolar disorder and her nephew Calen Pick, Jessie's son, has been diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. Both have now appeared in a provocative TV ad or public service announcement, a PSA in the USA, and they joined Glenn Close on the stage this week at the massive 2010 Society for Neuroscience meeting in San Diego. Introduction: Please join me in welcoming Glenn Close, Calen Pick and Jessie Close. Natasha Mitchell: And today on the show, highlights of their presentation to the audience of 30,000 brain scientists -- and you -- starting with Glenn herself. Glenn Close: **I'm the 12th generation of a stiff upper lip, pull up your socks, do it, don't talk about it, for God's sake don't show anything, work hard, don't whine, make money, don't spend it, win on the playing field, know how to play backgammon, bridge and golf, be great at cocktail parties Connecticut Yankee family.**

We are also a family who had absolutely no vocabulary for mental illness. Going to a psychiatrist was unthinkable, so although there was a lot of family-wide depression and alcoholism and even a death by suicide, we were clueless. Then Jessie and Calen got sick and we had to learn fast if they were to survive, and if we were to survive as a family. I was aware that they were struggling but I wasn't that aware, and I'm ashamed to say it took a while to sink in. But eventually I came to realise that they were in a life-and-death battle with bipolar disorder and schizoaffective disorder, and they were fighting to survive not only the symptoms and treatment of their illnesses, but the terrible stigma that surrounded them. So I'm here today not as an actress but as a member of a family. I've learned that one out of four families, one out of four families globally is touched in some way by mental illness. Mine happens to be one of them. Jessie once said to me, quite matter-of-factly, 'So I guess Calen and I are the sacrificial lambs.' So I decided to do something and my education began. I was shocked, because mental illness can be uncomfortable, all the clichés come into play, I actually wondered if becoming an outspoken advocate would affect my career. When thoughts like that go through my head, I ask myself what's the alternative -- not to do it? I find that unacceptable. So just about two and a half years ago a core group of us decided to launch a national campaign to help raise awareness and fight stigma, and BringChange2Mind was born. I asked Jessie and Calen if they would be willing to out themselves as living with mental illness on a national campaign. Without one iota of hesitation they both said yes. We aimed high, we decided to film the PSA (public service announcement) in Grand Central Station, Ron Howard came in as director, John Mayer donated his song 'Say', and a year ago August we found ourselves in Grand Central Station in a 90 degree heat with 100 volunteer extras, many of them consumers. We were there for 12 hours with people going about their businesses, catching their trains all around us. Not only did Jessie and Calen appear in the PSA but they wore a T-shirt, they wore a white T-shirt with their illnesses spelled out across their chest. It was an amazing act of courage, they were actively confronting stigma and overcoming it out there, observed by a constant crowd of people. All day I kept thinking as I looked into the faces of the crowd passing by: one family in four, one family in four. The BringChange2Mind site is a portal, the message that everyone gets is, 'You're not alone, we hear you. Here's my own personal experience and some resources that can help. You can get through it, and hopefully we can make it easier, you can lead a productive and balanced life.' We're not there to fix their problems but to hear them, to listen and to take advantage of professional resources that can help in the long run. A recent national study appearing in the American Journal of Psychiatry just this month, compared public beliefs and attitudes over the last decade. Though not all bad, the results were disappointing. Although more Americans reported that depression and schizophrenia are brain diseases, that they have heard and understood many of the amazing discoveries of neuroscience, the fact of the matter is that it's not enough. The team of researchers from Indiana and Columbia universities found that accepting the findings of neuroscience did not translate in lower levels of stigma either from individuals or for society as a whole. To improve the chance of recovery for people who live with mental illness so they can live their lives as richly and fully as possible, we must find ways to attack the persistent and toxic beliefs that reduce the quality of life for those with mental illness. We need to focus on the strengths and competencies that people with mental illness bring to society, to families, to schools and to the arts and sciences. All of you can help in this new struggle as you continue to make such astounding strides in finding the sources of disease and disorder. It will take consumers who have the courage to talk about their illnesses without fear or shame, and it will take a public who will respect and support them without judgment or censor. Let's finally collectively accept the fact that mental illness is a global family affair, it is part of what it means to be a human. What happens to us has everything to do with you. Honour that connection and stigma will be a thing of the past. Thank you. Natasha Mitchell: Glenn Close on ABC Radio National's All in the Mind with me, Natasha Mitchell. She's speaking from the stage of this week's Society for Neuroscience meeting in San Diego with more than 30,000 brain scientists. In the audience and joining her now to reach back deep into their family history is Glenn's sister Jessie. Jessie Close: Hi, I'll answer the obvious question first, this is my service dog and her name is Snits. She's charged with keeping me calm, there are no unwanted side effects with Snits except for dog hair and the constant need to find small patches of grass when we're travelling. My name is Jessie Close and I have lived with bipolar disorder since I was a teenager. For those of us who have mental illness, we know that untreated we don't present a delightful picture to the world. We know we're difficult and different. I lived most of my life under the unmedicated influence of a manic depressive disorder, so when I was properly medicated only six years ago that new stable me was the stranger. But I've become used to myself this way and I like it. I can now grieve without a control girl for me who tried to kill myself at 16 and then at 19 -- both times with pills. Because I wasn't successful with suicide I was told that what I'd done was a cry for help. My stomach was pumped both times and I was set back on my feet, shoved out the door. This was protocol 40 years ago, but I didn't get better even though I'd cried for help. This cry, if you're familiar with it, is a cry from the deepest, darkest place. When you want to die, living feels impossible, and there was no help in 1969 and 72, no resources like there are now. As far as my education is concerned I repeated 9th grade, my grades suffered as my moods swung from one extreme to another, my dorm mates at Rosemary Hall knew I'd do anything if asked -- like sliding the dorm mother's cat down the laundry chute. On the other side of the coin I spent an inordinate amount of time in the infirmary, hiding. Then I walked out of 10th grade. At 22 I took a graduate course in Manhattanville College, got an A and realised that I was smart. That was the end of my formal education. Life has taught me the rest. For the majority of my adult life I destroyed almost everything I cared about with my highs and lows. I felt only confusion and grief after experiencing a destructive manic episode that usually sent a husband or lover running, my children cringing, and a just-got-through-it-by-the-skin-of-my-teeth feeling after a dangerous depressive episode. I am now 57 years old and so very grateful to be alive. Glenn's and my great-uncle, Calen's great, great-uncle was a lunatic. I like that word. Unfortunately it carries a heavy load of stigma, but I like how ancient it is. It's comforting to know that mental illness has been a part of the human condition for thousands of years, and that I come from a mad but resilient lineage. The most frequently told story in our family involving uncle is that he once stripped naked in the stable, hopped astride a horse and rode over the hills of Greenwich, Connecticut. I suspect the moon was full when he did this, and I suspect he was experiencing mania. The romanticism of this stunt overrides the inevitable conclusion that uncle was manic. Whether he was manic depressive or not rests with history. Uncle was my maternal grandmother's older brother and his is the story involving madness that dates back as far as we can remember. I feel a kinship with uncle and I know how it feels to be him. On the other hand his sister, my grandmother, suffered from depression. Her symptoms began with staring off into space: not contemplative staring, just staring. I inherited that staring, and when I catch myself doing it I'm always afraid. In fact I can say that between uncle and my grandmother I have inherited both sides of their afflictions, the mania and the depression, bipolar disorder. If I could get away with being manic and riding bareback naked I would, but inevitably the depression would follow and I'd fall into the depths of despair. I randomly pulled Tender is the Night by F Scott Fitzgerald off my bookshelf the other night. I came upon a passage that stunned me, as he was describing manic depressive behaviour in the era of my uncle and grandmother. There was no language for this character's behaviour as there is now: Nicole saw that one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement that swept everyone up into it generating a really extraordinary virtuosity with people. The reaction came when he realised the waste and extravagance involved. He sometimes looked back with awe at the carnivals of affection he had given, as a general might gaze upon a massacre he had ordered to satisfy an impersonal blood lust. How well I remember looking back at what I had done while manic, only to realise I had left a trail of blood, of devastation behind me. My journey to understand why began in 1998 when, at the age of 45, I was diagnosed bipolar -- but just bipolar with none of the embellishments like psychotic tendencies and rapid cycling, which I now know I have. I was given medications, Tegretol and Celexa. As someone who would use alcohol to self-medicate for years I added it to the mix. The following years were the worst in my life. The medications were not precise, I was drinking heavily and I felt tortured, always secretly afraid that I would commit suicide and secretly afraid that I wouldn't. I did come close to killing myself again in 2001, this time with a gun. My husband at the time had a hand gun in his truck and I knew he hadn't locked it up that night. I crept outside at night to look for it. Calen was home from Maclean Hospital for Christmas vacation and his younger brother and sister were there too. I suddenly saw from outside of myself what the bloody sight of my dead body would do to my children. I stopped looking for the gun; in fact I never even opened the truck door. I knew I had to live, no matter how difficult, because of the three of them and the rest of my family. I ran to AA after the holiday, living through three relapses -- which is a polite way of saying I did three U-turns back to the bar on my way to an AA meeting. I have now been clean and sober for almost ten years, but thanks to the love and generosity of my family I was properly diagnosed at Maclean Hospital in 2004. Mental illness is not easy to spot when you have no experience with it. In 1999 when Calen was sliding down into the hell of schizoaffective disorder I thought he was simply being a trying teenager. Calen is my eldest child so I had no clue what was the norm. If only I'd known some of the warning signs. All I knew was that Calen wasn't Calen anymore. I'll always look back with shame and guilt that I had no idea what was happening to my son or what kind of help he needed. But shame and guilt only get in the way of positive progress. Those of us who live inside the world of mental illness are a community, and now with BringChange2Mind and other organisations we have been brought together for the help that is needed. During the time Calen was at Maclean Hospital, from 2000 to 2001, my bipolar illness became much worse. I lost yet another relationship because I was cycling very fast, had become delusional and was basically out of control. A condition husband number four didn't want in his life. As an aside, husband number three said the same thing, as did husband number five, which I must say is sad as I was finally clawing my way out of my illness by that time. Another aside is that we have an Aunt Eleanor who married six times and I always wanted to break her record but I'm just too tired -- I can't do it. My young daughter Maddy needed my care, and because of her presence I was able to make the enormous mental push needed to persevere. Without her I don't know what I would have done. The four stages of grief are denial, anger, acceptance, advocacy. Standing here with you today is my advocacy. You can't hurry this process. But Calen is back, I'm here, our family is intact, life is pretty good. In the beginning I spoke to a woman who told me her 32-year-old daughter was schizophrenic. I told her I was so sorry but she said no, don't be sorry, she's a wonderful person -- I can relate now. I used to miss my hooze and wild self but not anymore. I used to miss Calen's younger not-sick self but not anymore. It has become evident that for us we are exactly who we are meant to be. Thank you. Natasha Mitchell: Ah, we are exactly as we are meant to be -- how's that for a good line? Jessie Close there, actor Glenn Close's sister. Now here's Jessie's son, Calen Pick, also speaking at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, the peak body for brain scientists in the USA. Calen Pick: Hello, my name's Calen and I'm an artist. My biggest psychotic break came 11 years ago. I remember sitting in the emergency department waiting for a doctor to talk to my father and me. This whole experience of sitting in an emergency room, being psychologically evaluated became for me a trial to figure out whether I was God or the devil. I was trying to ascertain a truth that did not exist. I was benevolently coerced, after being deemed in need of hospitalisation, into signing myself in to a locked stabilisation unit. To be honest I had no idea what was going on, but very deep down I did know that I needed help. And when I finally walked in to the locked unit and felt the door click behind me, I remember feeling incredibly scared, thinking, 'I'm really not going to get out of here.' I was most definitely having a psychotic break or episode and, to this day, it was my worst. At the end of the hallway in front of the locked door I began to prostrate myself, praying for God to let me endure the fight that I would now have no choice but to take part in. For whatever reason on that day I thought I was now going to be forced to fight for my life. Security guards were called on to the unit as I was obviously needing to calm down. Sensing I was in danger I grabbed the chair from the common room and stood with my back facing the wall. A nurse rushed past me to close and lock an open door, I was now cornered and it took four guards to pin me down and restrain me by my arms and legs. When I was fighting the guards I looked up and saw an older man standing close by with a white beard and hair. I kept begging him for help, thinking that he was God, and I didn't understand why he wasn't intervening. But it wasn't his battle, it was mine. They carried me and four points strapped me down to a bed, finishing by injecting me with a strong dose of Haldol and I passed out. I settled in to the ward. It was not an incredibly comfortable place, but I would make do. Another patient and I decided to map out our conspiracy theories on the big white-board in the common room. I really worked myself up listening to the small FM radio and reading the music's lyrics at the same time, or reading into them. This episode was not brief, and for several days I held on to many obscure realisations as I fell further and further into psychosis. And later, not responding to the meds I was being given, I found myself pacing the short hallway, muttering to myself and very much on the edge of acting out. Acting out is always a possibility when you're psychotic, and I'm not really referring to violence but things like making faces and other expressions of internal dialogue or thoughts. So after being locked away for two weeks I finally came home to my dad's house in Helena. Things like watching TV became problematic, I would hear things in the dialogue, messages that the characters were trying to send me. It seemed as if people were talking in code, and no matter how hard I tried I couldn't understand it. After weeks of similar delusions I was presented with an option to go to Maclean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts, where my recovery finally began. Part of me knew that I was in a safe place and beginning my journey back to reality, and at the end of my evaluation I was deemed bipolar with psychotic tendencies, and it was recommended that I take up residence in Appleton House -- similar to a halfway house -- for further treatment. I decided to come to terms with the fact that I would be living this life that I never could have foreseen. This process of working things out and questioning what I'm thinking became something that resonates with me today. It should have been obvious to me that I no longer would need to feel guilty, because all these great people were working so hard to help. After two years I made the decision to come home and did so at age 20. Of course I was not able to matriculate back into society with ease and I did remain fairly isolated. It was an incredibly slow process: two steps forward, one step back sort of thing. I had to cognitively work on my thought processes so that I would make new connections and live in reality. I would often experience extreme mania and then inevitably crash. The slightest depression would quickly kindle a falling into darkness. When manic I could hardly control myself from going into a blissful frenzy or a state of extreme happiness. Very rarely was I able to let my mind relax, and whenever I tried I would be bombarded by intrusive thoughts, anxiety and delusions. In reality I could not rely on my mind. I had no idea who I was -- and by this I don't mean that I didn't know my name, but that I had lost the skills to relate to other humans as a whole person. If I couldn't explain to myself who I was, how could I explain to anyone else? Being able to cognitively mould myself into something else became one of my greatest goals, and in order to accomplish this I needed patience. Day after day I inched forward. It's been ten years around and I've changed quite a bit. I've always used art to express myself and I find that dreaming of new projects is something that really makes life worthwhile. The process of creating, bringing a dream to reality is what I live for. So much of my life is dreaming, probably too much. At first my thoughts were muddled. However, they have slowly become clear. Finally after ten years I am able to live with a sense of clarity and see the light. I try to remember to stay in the moment, for here is the real reality. We are only what we think. If I had to say one thing to everybody here, mentally ill or not, it would be to never give up on yourself. Every day we are presented with choices: for myself it might be whether to accept myself as a good person, or maybe that I need to quieten my mind. Within everyone are two seeds: a good seed and a bad seed. I encourage you to look within yourself for the truth, love yourself and nurture the good seed. Time can fly by, life does not last long. Cancel all the apathy you can, hold yourself responsible for becoming a caring spirit who knows that we should admire people for their strengths but also love them for trying to overcome their weakness. Thank you. Natasha Mitchell: Calen Pick, joining his aunt, actor Glenn Close and mother Jessie Close on stage at the big Society for Neuroscience meeting in San Diego earlier this week, and thanks to the society for that recording. More details of Glenn's BringChange2Mind campaign on our website.