



# Invisible Children's Project

– Information for Parents –

## **A Personal Experience from Bob: Living with a Parent with Schizophrenia**

I grew up angry with my dad throughout my entire childhood. He accused me of so many horrible things. He talked to people that didn't exist, and he saw people that weren't there, and he never trusted me.

Once, I remember trying to walk to school, and my dad insisted on driving me to school because he "knew" I was going to do drugs. I *never* did drugs, but he still accused me of it. He said "someone" told him that I was doing drugs and that the person saw me doing drugs. He was wrong and I was mad.

My dad always thought everyone, including my mom, was out to get him. He questioned my mom about everything, thinking she was trying to hide things from him. He frequently accused me of conspiring against him with my mother. When they fought, he was automatically angry with me, because he really felt the two of us were trying to make his life miserable as a team. I couldn't understand why she put up with his behavior.

Needless to say, this led to fights, and once again, I was angry with my father for starting the fights. I can't tell you how many times I watched my mom cry, knowing that through all of this chaos, she still loved him.

I didn't understand until I was an adult that the "someone" he spoke of was a part of his imagination and that he had paranoid schizophrenia—a crippling mental health problem that causes people to see and hear people and things that don't exist. A problem that makes them distrust nearly everyone; which means they have trouble having and maintaining relationships and friendships.

As an adult, I realized that I had been angry my whole childhood. Once I learned about my dad's mental health problem, I was able to have more positive feelings about my family and me. I spoke to a counselor about my feelings and my fears. Today, my dad still acts differently, but now I understand that it isn't my fault.