

# Five Courageous Women, Five Personal Stories, Five Documentary Films

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*1 in 4. That's the statistic for how many of us will have a mental illness over the course of our lifetimes - sometimes fleeting, sometimes enduring, always significant. At that rate, if it's not ourselves, it will be a parent, sibling, partner, child, friend or colleague. Some of us will carry the diagnosis and virtually all of us will be impacted in one way or another. Despite this nearly universal experience, the vast majority of personal stories remain unreflected, unanalyzed and untold.*



[Photo Credit](#)

*The five documentary films highlighted here break the silence. They tell exquisitely personal stories of loss, pain, courage and healing in the face of mental illness. The five filmmakers bring to light otherwise deep, dark, hidden stories - stories that are eerily familiar to us all. In their works, these women stare down the flotsam and jetsam of suffering and injustice that is everywhere when it comes to mental illness. Individually and collectively, their works are a rally cry.*

## **1. [Hidden Pictures](#)**

This film is Delaney Ruston's groundbreaking documentary that connects her personal experience of growing up "under the shadows of her dad's illness" of schizophrenia to the experiences of other families globally. After years of being estranged from her father, Delaney looks deep inside her own experience and looks far across the globe to hear from individuals in India, China, South Africa, France, and the US. She finds systems that fail individuals and families, stigma that silences them and heroes that care enough to advocate for loved ones and champion change.

## **2. [That Way Madness Lies](#)**

Shakespeare was the master of tragedy. And King Lear is the quintessential tragic hero. Driven to madness by a cosmic collision of errors and misfortune, King Lear laments, "O, that way madness lies; let me shun that; No more of that." Yes, noble men, even King Lear, can succumb to insanity. So can noble institutions. And so it is that our psychiatric hospitals, mental health policies, and legal systems can seem downright insane at times. That Way Madness Lies...is an award winning documentary by filmmaker Sandra Luckow that portrays the descent of her brother, Duane, into psychosis. It also captures the crazy, broken mental health system that the

family encounters in their desperate efforts to help Duanne.

### 3. [Kings Park](#)

This is Lucy Winer's story that takes us back to the 1960's when she was seventeen years old and committed to the female violent ward of Kings Park State Hospital following a series of failed suicide attempts. It is decades later that Lucy embarks on a journey back to Kings Park for the first time. A veteran documentary filmmaker, she knew her story needed to be told. Lucy takes us both back in time and forward in healing - exposing the inhumanity and compassion that coexisted as odd bedfellows in what is now an abandoned institution. Kings Park captures the shameful legacy of our state psychiatric hospitals and the chasm in care left by the closure of such institutions.

### 4. [Here One Day](#)

Imagine finding a hidden box of audiotapes from your deceased parent who died by suicide? This is precisely what happened to Kathy Leichter. It was more than a decade later that Kathy dared to listen to these recordings. As she makes her way through the tapes, she comes to understand more deeply the suffering of her mother, the particular pressures her mother experienced being married to a State Senator, and her mother's increasingly volatile psychological life stemming from bipolar disorder. Here One Day is about how losing a loved one to suicide is a family story that has a long tail of suffering and grieving and discovery and healing.

### 5. [32 Pills: My sister's suicide](#)

According to Hope Litoff, her sister, Ruth, was a "complex, sometimes dark, and brilliant artist." She was beautiful, talented, and engaging - when she was well. She also suffered from serious mental illness, and in spite of her many efforts to get help, her multiple attempts to take her own life ultimately won out. She died by suicide almost exactly ten years ago. In 32 Pills: My sister's suicide, we join Hope as she revisits the past, relapses after 16 years of sobriety, makes her way to rehab and ultimately reaches a place in her journey where she is able to "know and accept Ruth in death in a way that [she] was never able to in life ... and to learn to live with the pain of losing her."

32 Pills: My sister's suicide will premiere on HBO on December 8th at 7PM ET.

*These films are clearly not light romantic comedies, but they are filled with love, compassion, hope and even humor. They are five exquisitely personal stories. With slight variation, they are tragically shared by too many.*

*Ruston, Luckow, Leichter, Winer and Litoff don't sugar coat their frustration with and condemnation of the healthcare systems that fail far too many. They also tell their stories with candor, tenderness, respect, dignity, inspiration and hope. The combination is a powerful rally cry.*