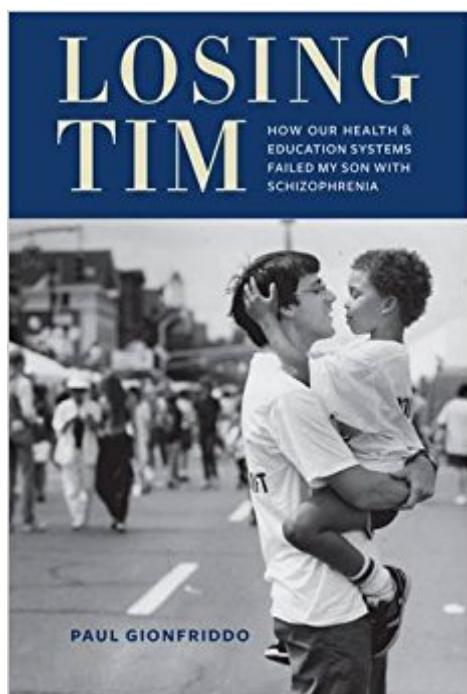


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# Losing Tim: How Our Health And Education Systems Failed My Son With Schizophrenia



## **Synopsis**

Paul Gionfriddo's son Tim is one of the "6 percent" — an American with serious mental illness. He is also one of the half million homeless people with serious mental illnesses in desperate need of help yet underserved or ignored by our health and social-service systems. In this moving, detailed, clear-eyed exposé, Gionfriddo describes how Tim and others like him come to live on the street. Gionfriddo takes stock of the numerous injustices that kept his son from realizing his potential from the time Tim first began to show symptoms of schizophrenia to the inadequate educational supports he received growing up, his isolation from family and friends, and his frequent encounters with the juvenile justice system and, later, the adult criminal-justice system and its substandard mental health care. Tim entered adulthood with limited formal education, few work skills, and a chronic, debilitating disease that took him from the streets to jails to hospitals and then back to the streets. *Losing Tim* shows that people with mental illness become homeless as a result not of bad choices but of bad policy. As a former state policy maker, Gionfriddo concludes with recommendations for reforming America's ailing approach to mental health.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A father's description of his family's struggles to raise and support a son with significant psychiatric difficulties, along with his reflections on the failures and gaps in care that his son encounters consistently over the course of his first two decades of life. The story is painful and instructive, and unfortunately not uncommon. (Larry Davidson, Yale University) Combining the perspectives of a

loving father and a mental health policy expert, Gionfriddo describes the unintended results of a mental health system for children that places responsibility for responding to mental disorders on those afflicted by them. He makes an incontrovertible case for restructuring public policies and child mental health services to build upon the child and family and its strengths and needs as the foundation for continuous, respectful, flexible, and adaptive systems response. (Charles Bruner, executive director, Child and Family Policy Center)Losing Tim is a memoir of passion and a call to action. It is a must-read for all policy makers, practitioners, and school personnel. As a parent who is raising a child with mental illness, and as the leader of a national mental health organization created to offer support to families, I would also recommend this book as a resource to families who struggle raising a child with mental illness in a rigid, nonintegrated service system. Paul details the journey through the maze of getting the proper diagnosis and the needed supports and services in a way that must lead to change. (Sandra A. Spencer, executive director, National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health)Gionfriddo has a unique perspective on the concrete functioning of the real mental health 'system' in America that involves schools, justice facilities, housing departments, disability programs, the courts, general health care, and addiction and mental health programs. His unique take is a story of confusion, missed opportunities, and a roller coaster of emotions as the young Tim grows out of his family's orbit to launch his life while trying to find his strategy to accommodate his life goals with schizophrenia. This story is touching, frustrating, and all too common. Hopefully in its retelling, we can find new strategies to really address the needs of families struggling with severe mental illnesses. (David Shern, senior science advisor, Mental Health America)The best policy makers are those who focus on how their work affects the people they serve. As a former legislator who became the parent of a son with schizophrenia, Paul Gionfriddo found himself in a position to discover firsthand that even the best-intentioned laws don't always work for those who must rely on them. His book shows how personal struggles have helped him to rethink our nation's approach to mental health policy. (Patrick J. Kennedy, founder, the Kennedy Forum, and cofounder, One Mind for Research)A memoir that makes a strong argument: the public policy around mental illness is in shambles.... Gionfriddo's story is powerful, persuasive, and sad. (Publishers Weekly)[Gionfriddo] provides a heartbreakingly honest account of his son Tim's struggles with mental illness—and presents a call to action. (Jessica Bylander Health Affairs)More than a memoir, it's a touchstone for families who believe they are alone in an uphill battle with America's attitude toward—and treatment of—mental health. (Carlos Frias The Palm Beach Post)The author does a phenomenal job in giving a voice to a population that is often marginalized and voiceless. (Psychiatric Services)

Paul Gionfriddo was born and raised in Middletown, Connecticut, and graduated from Wesleyan University. He was elected to the Connecticut General Assembly in 1978 and mayor of Middletown in 1989. He has led nonprofits in three states and was on the adjunct faculty at Wesleyan University and Trinity College. In 2014, he was named president and CEO of Mental Health America. He lives in Lake Worth, Florida, with his wife, Pam.

Everyone needs to read this book! You don't have to work in mental health, homelessness, education to read this book, you just need to be a caring member of the human race. We shouldn't be treating mental illness any differently than we would treat any life limiting, serious illness. Would anyone deny a child with cancer or muscle dystrophy an appropriate education? I have hope because in my childhood we did not talk about cancer, the "c" word and as a young adult AIDS was just not discussed. I long for the day when we have parity for physical and mental health issues and realize early diagnosis and prevention are so much more cost effective than indifference. No one can tell the story better than Paul Gionfriddo who lived the nightmare of losing his son to mental illness. No one could have advocated better or cared more than he and his family did but it is literally like having to fight cancer on your own with limited resources, no referrals and not even a clear diagnosis of what type of disease you have. Read this book and then bow down and pray for your good fortune if you have never had to deal with a serious mental illness in your family. And take another look at the next "crazy homeless" person you see and remember this is somebody's child, lost and alone.

Was disappointed that it didn't direct those affected by mental health issues how to more strongly make a difference in educating, promoting research for better medications and care.

Must read for anyone dealing with the mental health system in the US.

Every page shows Paul's love for his son, however, the theme of the book is unrelentingly about the programs, policies and institutions that had an opportunity to help Tim and did not. The few successes only serve to highlight the missed possibilities. While Tim comes across as bright and caring even as he deals with his complex and disturbing illness, this story is less about him and more about the flaws in a system for which we all share responsibility.

I got a free copy of this book when the author came to my workplace and spoke about mental health issues. This is the real description of unconditional love of a father to his son; his dedication and courage to be able to provide healthcare for his mentally ill son was admirable. You could feel it while reading it was as if you are watching a movie. Once you started reading this book, you will never put it down. I cried in the Epilogue....

I have known Paul for over 20 years and have known Tim from his younger days. This book will help revolutionize the way we treat people with mental illnesses. B4Stage4 will be so crucial to our future! Read this book and learn why I consider Paul a friend, a colleague and a gifted warrior!

A must read. I often have a hard time reading memoirs about the loss of a loved one gone too soon. For some reason I was drawn to "Losing Tim". The writing is honest, fluid, and heartbreakingly honest. But not for one second did I want to skip through the pages, put it down, or walk away. I was enthralled by the mother's journey to understand what her son Tim Eysselinck was going through. She desperately wanted to understand his decision. Nantes love for son is evident. I'm thankful for the opportunity to get to know Tim has she remembers and I'm ever grateful for Tim's service. I'll be thinking of this memoir for quite some time.

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