



Gabriela: A voice for my daughter

By Bobbie Shufani

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An intensely personal true story of advocating for a young woman struggling with seizures, mental illness, and powerful medication and how this mixture became a threat to her survival along with the failures of our healthcare system and having a single parent navigate it all. The story starts after months of unsuccessful attempts to get neurological and psychiatric help for Gabriela took its toll. Finally, the police were called early one morning to pull Gabriela out of the Holy water at a local church and she was put on her first psych hold. It was during that hospitalization Gabriela's psychiatrist determined her psychotic break was, as Gabriela had claimed, the result of the antiepileptic drugs. The continuing refusal of the neurologist to make any adjustments to Gabriela's medications despite the requests of Gabriela herself, her mother, and the psychiatrist who treated her resulted in a second psychotic break so severe that Gabriela stopped eating, drinking, sleeping, sitting, or speaking. This time Gabriela was effectively abandoned by the neurological community and the only recourse was treatment at a cult-like psychiatric facility that, in the process of rehabilitating her, attempted to break her relationship with her mother.

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