The Only Thing More Exhausting Than Having A Mental Illness Is Pretending That You Don’t

Anonymous
WHY THE HECK AM I HERE?

- 17 years living with depression
- Let’s add in anxiety and PTSD
- Counseling and medication—How’s that working?
- Raising a child with depression and anxiety—Oh, boy...

I refuse to live my life with shame or stigma (finally)
OK, WHAT AM I GONNA DO FOR YOU?

- Share my "origin story"-How did I get here?
- What do you say to others in the workplace about your mental health
- Go a little "spin city" on you
- Libraries are a prime place to face your issues- Inclusion is for you too
HERE IS SOME OF OUR INTERIOR
...A LITTLE BIT MORE...
EVERY LIBRARY NEEDS A MASCOT

LAYLA
OUR FIRST LIBRARY MASCOT & GREETER
BRINGER OF COMFORT & JOY
AND THEY COME IN ANY SIZE OR COLOR
SPOILED STAFF MEMBER AND OUR FACEBOOK STAR!

FINN- AKA MY UNOFFICIAL MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY DOG
"How are you?"

FINE

Confused; Betrayed
Useless
Broken
Never good Enough
Fragile; Anxious
I'm falling apart and you don't notice it
Pathetic; Annoying
Rejected
Lonely
Defeated
FIRST, SOME STATISTICS

- 1 in 5 people suffer from mental health issues
- Depression is 2x as likely to affect women than men
- Different contributing factors
  - Biology and hormones
  - Life circumstances and cultural stressors
  - Psychological causes
- Frequently leads to other issues

Mayo Clinic
Psycosm
But what about men?

- 10%-17% of men develop depression
- Combination of genes, hormones and environmental stress
- Men 4X more likely to commit suicide
- Precursor for other illnesses
- Stealth symptoms

Harvard Health Publishing
SO, WHAT’S MY PROBLEM?

- 50%-75% of women experience baby blues
- 15% develop postpartum depression (PPD)
- If not treated, PPD can last months or longer
- May become a chronic depressive disorder.
- Even with treatment, PPD can make you more likely to have episodes of depression in the future.
6 SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

If you experience five or more in a two week period you could have Major Depressive Disorder (MDD).

YOU FEEL DOWN MOST OF THE TIME
If you’ve officially turned into Eeyore and struggle to find positivity.

NOTHING FEELS FUN ANY MORE
The things that used to give you joy no longer do, and you’ve lost interest.

YOUR WEIGHT IS UP (OR WAY DOWN)
Depression can mess with your hunger signals so you eat more or a lot less.

YOU’RE ABSOLUTELY EXHAUSTED
You feel tired all the time, but your brain won’t stop, so you can’t sleep.

CURRENT STATUS: COUCH POTATO
You’ve had a major slowdown in thoughts and simply lay around.

THE GUILT WON’T GO AWAY
Feeling worthless and/or guilty all the time is the new norm.
ANXIETY & DEPRESSION ARE BEST FRIENDS

- Nervousness
- Sleep Disorders
- Irritability
- Problems with concentration
- No evidence of causation
- Clear evidence many suffer from both
OK, WHAT ELSE?

or

PRE-EXISTING DEPRESSION & DIVORCE

- DIVORCE - yep, then that happened
- SAHM to........???
- Where did my kids go?
- Where did my self-esteem go?
- Constant voice in my head-YOU SUCK!
“That’s the thing about depression: A human being can survive almost anything, as long as she sees the end in sight. But depression is so insidious, and it compounds daily, that it’s impossible to ever see the end. The fog is like a cage without a key.”

Elizabeth Wurtzel, author
VERY FEW PEOPLE WILL EVER REALLY UNDERSTAND

When you suffer from depression and somebody tells you to just cheer up...

- Don’t exhaust yourself trying to explain
- Details are for you to reveal, not for anybody else to demand
- Try to understand your needs; what is really possible in your current reality
THANK YOU AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

- 2013 61% of individual health plans covered mental illness
- Premiums could be increased and coverage could be denied
- 2014 ACA made mental health a required health benefit
- Differences based on employer provided, large vs. small group plans, Marketplace plans and state provided plans
- Please see a health insurance professional to be sure you are on the best plan available for mental health care
THE JOB HUNT BEGINS: AROUND AND AROUND AND AROUND WE GO
Employment can have a positive effect
You gotta just face the stigma in the workplace that is associated with mental illness
Assumptions made about your ability to perform your job well
Strategies to work around these barriers
Honesty, honesty, honesty
DID I REALLY JUST GET CALLED FOR AN INTERVIEW?

- Know your strengths and talents. Seek jobs where you feel that you can excel and bring something to the table.
- Voluntary questions are just that - voluntary
- Tackle the process one step at a time
But times, they are a-changing.

Opening Up

62% of Millennials say they’re comfortable discussing their mental health issues, compared to 32% of Baby Boomers.

Source: American Psychiatric Association.
Mental Health is a Diversity and Inclusion Issue

Millennial, Gen Z and LGBTQ respondents had higher rates of mental health symptoms, had symptoms for longer durations, were more open to mental health treatment and were more comfortable talking about mental health at work.

Black and Latino respondents experienced higher rates of every mental health symptom compared to all respondents.

Women were more likely to have gotten treatment for a mental health condition in the past.

Source: Mind Share Partners’ 2019 Mental Health at Work Report. Data is based on an online survey of 1,500 people.
THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

● Inexplicable fears: mail, phone calls, anything unexpected

● Hypnagogic and hypnopompic (parasomnia) hallucinations/dreams

● Even more severe anxiety

● Uncontrollable thoughts

● Panicking when thinking about the event

● Everyday tasks became impossible
PTSD Symptoms

- Intrusive thoughts, memories, flashbacks, and dreams
- Avoidance of reminders of the traumatic event(s)
- Alterations in cognition and mood
- Alterations in arousal and reactivity

Source: American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)
AND THEN THERE’S THIS

DAD, I WILL SAY THIS ONCE AND ONLY ONCE SO PAY ATTENTION

YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT EVERYTHING. EVER.
LIBRARIES AS MENTAL HEALTH HUBS

- Strive to offer visitors mental health support
- Librarians play so many roles, that there seems to be no support for ourselves
- For those with depression, anxiety, etc. we need more than ideas for “self-care”
- Meditation and bubble baths only go so far (although they are comforting)
BLACK HOLES ARE ALWAYS WAITING TO OPEN UP

• For me, I lost Layla—my support system
• Kids growing, fear of being alone
• Ageing parents, loss of family
• Upcoming life changes
ENTER....THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

- The ADA defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that subsequently limits one or more major life activities
- Prohibits discrimination against mental health impairments
- Includes depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders
- People have varied responses and different needs
- Try to find strategies that work for you
WHAT DO YOU NEED?

● Try to define what will help you perform your job
● What accommodations must be provided - based on size of your library
● Plan ahead...Do you need to request from the beginning, or see how it plays out
● Emphasize how your mindset creates a more compassionate attitude
● Make sure employees are on board and treated equally
THE WORKPLACE I CREATED

- Space for decompression
- Work at home when necessary
- Mental Health Days (make up hours at another time)
- Flexibility for last minute schedule changes
- Positive encouragement and support
- Board support for family and self health first
- Communication and caring
RESOURCES

- Family and Medical Leave Act
dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla
- Americans with Disabilities Act
adata.org/factsheet/health
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/depression-ptsd-other-mental-health-conditions-workplace-your-legal-rights
- National Alliance on Mental Health
nami.org
- Marketplace Insurance
healthcare.gov
“My mental health problems are real and they are valid. I will not judge myself for the bad days when I can barely get out of bed. I will not make myself feel worse because someone else appears to be handling their mental illness better than I am handling mine. Recovery is not a competition.”

Matt Joseph Diaz, Tumblr