



The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it. - Moliere

My struggles with mental illness started in 1994 while I was a junior in high school. A terrible argument with my parents resulted in my first suicide attempt and hospitalization that lasted for a week. I always resisted treatment because I thought depression was something imaginary in your head and was not real. The psychiatrists started me on anti-depressants and like many people I suffered from terrible side effects. These side effects along with thinking mental illness was not real led me to stop taking the medications. In the years following high school my mental illness only got worse in severity and resulted in two more hospitalizations in 2002 and 2003. After my last hospitalization in 2003 I finally realized I needed to get some real help with my mental illness.

In the years following my last hospitalization saw me trying so many medications I lost count. I had to call the suicide prevention line so many times I was on a first name basis with some of the counselors. I made at least three different visits to various crisis centers around the state, partial hospitalization followed by day treatment. I become disillusioned with my physical appearance because some of the medications I was taking made me gain a considerable amount of weight.

I participated in DBT training which helped me learn and use mindfulness to help improve my quality of life. The medication regiment along with numerous therapists over the years finally helped me deal with my symptoms in a healthy way.

Along with meds and therapy I've found ARMHS workers helped me tremendously by pushing me to get out and socialize and to come out of my shell more. This is important to me because one of the things I suffer from is social anxiety. I realize now there is no "silver bullet," medication that works wonders. I discovered for me it takes a combination of meds, therapy, ARMHS, and healthy social activities to help me in dealing with my mental illness.

More than anything, I discovered working as a peer specialist not only helps others by sharing my own story, it also helps me deal with my own mental health as well. By helping others it gives me a sense of worth and a sense of being here for a reason.

When clients tell me they don't like taking meds because of the side effects, I'm one of the first people to say everyone's body chemistry is different. What works for one person doesn't mean it will work for you.

My peer training helped me see once in for all I wasn't alone in my mental illness and others suffered from the same thing and had some of the same difficulties in their life.

Ricky Brey
Certified Peer Specialist

We are the evidence; We hold the hope.