



"I believe in prescription drugs. I believe in feeling better."-Denis Leary

I was young and this whole mental health diagnosis was very new to me. I was scared, I was angry, and I was embarrassed. At sixteen I received my first mental health diagnosis of clinical depression. I had no clue this would be the first of many diagnoses throughout the rest of my teen and adult life.

Even worse than the diagnosis was the fact I had to take medication, which was supposed to help me feel better. With the meds came a slew of side effects I was not prepared for. These meds, I felt, were making me feel worse. Between the nausea, fatigue, headaches, dry mouth, and much more, I couldn't understand why I needed to take medication.

The first few years of taking meds, with the encouragement and support of my family, I was able to stick to the regiment of pills prescribed to me. I hated it, but there was not much I could do about it. My parents were very diligent in reminding me to take them. I could not relate feeling good with taking a pill. It just didn't make sense to me.

It was really around turning nineteen that I realized I was on my own regarding self-care. I had outside support, but I wasn't a child anymore, so I didn't need to listen if I didn't want to. So I would stop taking my meds. I spent most of my twenties on a rollercoaster of ups and downs...which looking back, correlated with whether I was taking my meds routinely or not. I would take my meds for a while and notice I would start to feel good, or even a little happy. I felt good so why take medication? So I would stop. A few days, maybe a week later I would crash and end up in the hospital emergency department. This pattern became my MO.

After a good ten to fifteen years of this pattern, and ten to fifteen years of strained relationships, jobs, jumping from therapist to therapist and ignoring my mental wellbeing, I became more self-aware. I cannot pin point the time, age, or location this happened. I just knew I was sick of being sick. Something, anything had to be done, and for the first time in my life I was willing to work on me.

I began taking my meds regularly, with the direction and assistance of my psychiatrist. I had a therapist who was helpful for a while, and a few years later I started DBT. DBT was the next life changer, teaching me to listen to my values and apply new coping skills.

I was not always on schedule with my meds, and not always stable even when taking them. I still made trips to the emergency department, called crisis lines, and needed a lot of support from my network of family and friends. These difficult times became fewer and farther between. I was learning new coping skills, and finally made a connection: **with the help of prescribed medication my ability to apply these coping skills became easier each time.**

I have learned through a scattered, difficult history of loathing prescribed medications for mental illness, that I have nothing to be ashamed of. People with other health diagnoses such as diabetes, cancer, lupus, and many more, usually take prescribed medication to help manage their illness. Mental illness is no different. With the help of prescribed medication, managing mental well-being can be less complicated. Practice of skills with that medication can even make life enjoyable. I never thought I would be an advocate of a regular med regiment, and I do understand that medication is not for everyone. I just want to put out there, from personal experience, prescribed medication can work. Especially when combined with therapy and skills.

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We are the evidence; We hold the hope.