

November Peer Perspective

Dealing with Invisible Pain

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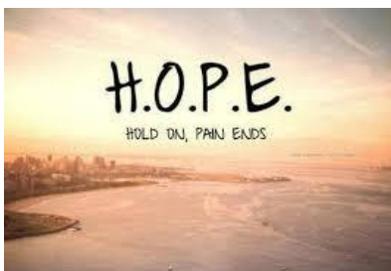
Keeping a positive outlook can be difficult at times, especially in times such as... well, all of 2020. Overall, I think I do well in thinking positive and having a good outlook on life and the future. This was not always the case for me, as I had to work hard to get to where I am today. I did it, it was difficult, and there is always more to do, but here I am. So why do I feel so hopeless and insecure lately? It took many days of introspection and reflection of the past year to the past few months and even past few days to figure out... I am in physical pain.

Invisible physical pain, in which I mean that my injury is physically inside of me with zero visible ailment outside. Invisible illness/injury is not new to me. I have struggled with mental health issues my entire life and sprinkled with ailments that are not openly seen by the random passerby. My recent issue is a couple of herniated discs in my cervical spine. I honestly don't know how it happened. I just woke up one day in August in pain and I could not raise my arm up to put my hair in a ponytail, reach to the cupboard for a glass, or even hold the phone to my ear without pain jolting down my arm and making my hand go numb.

I am no stranger to pain. I was in a nasty car wreck in high school that resulted in physical therapy for the following two years. I have grown a pretty strong tolerance throughout my life. Pain certainly wears on a person, and on their overall state of mind. The pain that peaks at an 8 or a 9 is horrible, but it is intermittent. It's that dull ache, day in and day out that truly puts me into a funk. The pain makes me depressed, and the depression makes me focus on the pain, which hurts more because I'm focused on it. So, how do I fight this?

I don't. I ride it. Fighting it is exhausting and I may as well fight a T-rex with a cotton swab. I openly accept that I am hurting and find things to do to take breaks from focusing on how much I hurt. Sometimes I pamper myself with a soak in a warm tub with bubbles, while enjoying a small piece of chocolate. Sometimes I focus on my work here at CMMHC and listen as well as relate to the peers I call weekly. Another day I might color a little, do a craft, or pretty up part of my living space. Mind you this is not 100% effective. I still have many days of teary moments no matter if it is from physical pain or emotional despair. That is ok.

I was bummed my positivity was gone. Now I realize it is not gone. It just transformed. I went through a time of transition, where I lost sight of perspective. It never went away; it just took a back seat while my body did what it needed to do to alert me that something is not working right inside. That is what pain is, is it not? An alert? I know my body. I know my mind. I know what I am capable of. I am still me, with the same interests, same heart, same values, but with a new perspective on what positivity means to me.



We are the evidence; We hold the hope.