

RECOVERY IN ACTION NEWSLETTER

AFFIRMATION CORNER

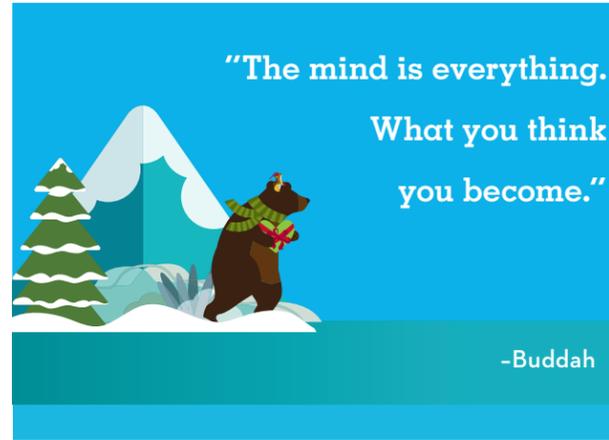
I am confident and strong.
 I love and respect myself.
 I am enough.
 I am intelligent and capable
 I treasure my imperfections
 I acknowledge my self-worth

Found at danxiety.com



"The mind is everything.
 What you think
 you become."

-Buddha



WEB SUPPORT FOR RECOVERY

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."

- Steve Jobs

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- Free Mental Health App mystrength.com (use code WELLNESSWEB)
- Western Slope Mental Health Support namiws.org or namiwesternslope@gmail.com
- Colorado Health Partnership yourchp.org or achievesolutions.net/chp
- Colorado Peak Social Support Colorado.gov/PEAK
- Depression & Bipolar Support dbsalliance.org
- For Teens & Young Adults voices4hope.net
- For Those Who Hear Voices hearingvoicesusa.org
- Peer Groups & Schedules MindSpringsHealth.org/peer-services
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 CLIENT ADVOCATE
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WINTER 2021



MY LIFE EXPERIENCE

By Atis S.

It feels like only days ago that I first felt an overwhelming feeling I couldn't explain the reason for. This time it was sadness, a deep soul wrenching sadness that had me crying uncontrollably, helpless, laying on the floor of the hallway upstairs away from the rest of the family. Sobs akin to dry heaves wracked my body while I could do nothing to stop them. When my mother came up to console me and tried to understand the cause of my behavior I recall being completely honest with her. I had no idea why I was sad, just that I was. With no explanation for what had happened with me I felt broken, broken and alone. This took place when I was sixish.

By the time I had reached high school age I had been officially diagnosed with depression which eventually evolved into seasonal affective disorder, which translated means slightly too happy in the summer and a little too melancholy come the long nights of winter. I do know snowboard therapy has helped every winter, particularly since I found the ability to turn and stop without having to use my face to do so. Around this point in my life visits to the therapist's office started and soon enough they were complimented by the occasional stop at the psychiatrist's office to grab a hall pass to the pharmacy. Some drugs helped some symptoms and some had more side effects than others. It was a constant struggle and self-medicating with an occasional joint seemed to help as did meditating. Still, the "medication" was far from medical grade, usually an unknown strain and my meditating was quite undisciplined. I graduated from seasonal affective disorder to a bi-polar disorder diagnosis during the summer of 2000 two years after graduating high school.

It was just after my first "manic/high energy/I'll sleep after I die-experience" that I took part in the clinical trials for a then relatively new drug. It seemed to work well and for a while I was symptom free. The side effects could have been worse and with my psychiatrist's consent I continued to self-medicate

with THC and CBD. Following his advice further, I did my best to minimize my alcohol intake. Still, although I lacked the vocabulary or understanding necessary to elaborate, I knew that something was indeed amiss.

Quite a few years flew past me like migrating monarchs, while I looking back, consider myself lucky to have witnessed them. Then again I also count myself lucky to have survived till now for there were pterodactyls scattered amongst the butterflies doing their best to blend in. A few substance dulled years



would fly by with their orange and black speckled wings when the metaphorical flying dinosaur excrement would hit the fan and my life would dramatically change. I would do things that were deserving of long periods of deeply depressed sessions of self-reflection. I was ashamed of these events even without the added contemplation of the opinions belonging to others. Sometimes looking people in the eye was difficult and it was far worse with imaginary extinct winged lizard dung permeating my being.

Now with nearly four decades of experiences to look back on I can see a pattern through introspection and self-reflection. My hindsight may not be 20/20 yet I do believe that I'm privy to insights unavailable in the classroom or any textbook devoted to the study of mental illness. On and off medication I have had highly "manic" or very depressed episodes or rather battles for balance in my life. A pattern that has emerged and is easy to see in hindsight is that I only got in trouble with the "law" when in a mentally, spiritually and physically unbalanced state or if you prefer psychobabble, a "manic" state.

That sixish year old I mentioned before also had some other characteristics that have helped me connect certain dots and there are certain peculiarities of his eventual adventures that have done the same. He usually got along better with

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MY LIFE EXPERIENCE Continued from page 1

four legged animals than most two legged ones, often to the bewilderment of some pet owners. He also felt emotions far more intensely than many of those around him which was certainly a reason to try dulling them. **Over the years the tools for this technique ranged from cannabis, alcohol and cigarettes to the alternate realities of movies, video games & TV shows which eventually was transformed into a yoga and meditation practice coupled with a mindful diet, exercise and self-induced nature therapy.** Some character traits and behaviors needed to be curbed while others allowed to flourish. To do so consciously had finally become a priority to me.

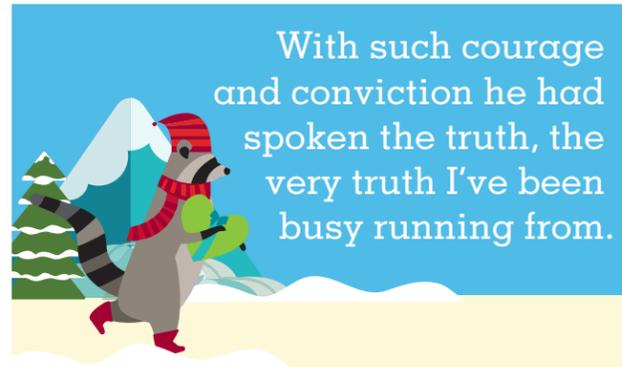
I feel it's pertinent to mention my childhood dreams and goals at this point which I had neglected with some fervor since I had grown up and in many ways left that magical time and place. At the tender age of fourish my mother asked me what I wanted to do with my life and motivation that still bewilders my current adult self. **"I want to be a clown mum..." I had responded in a rather serious tone, with an added explanation of "many need to laugh. Most people are far too serious," I had told her.** To this day I still agree with the little kid who had spoken those words of wisdom.

Here I am nearly four decades later having spent most of that time disappointing that little one. The child that I, in a silly and backwards way, still look up to. With such courage and conviction he had spoken the truth, the very truth I've been busy running from. Over the years I jumped from one job to another, feeling at home in none and finding barely any amount of satisfaction with any of them. It could be that I have aggravated my inner child enough for him to throw a temper tantrum time and time again. **I can almost visualize him in my mind's eye, frustrated at his wit's end, doing whatever he thought necessary to get the attention of his adult self. In acknowledging the little child within me, I felt I was taking a leap of a step into grown-up-land.**

Maybe I was just an empath receiving the emotions of others yearning to be more of a projector. Perhaps I had bottled up enough absorbed emotions throughout the years and it was inevitable that they would eventually spill over making a mess in the process. Could it be that I don't have a lifelong mental illness but simply put, am a "highly sensitive person" with unrealized goals? Perhaps I was born with a certain condition that requires vigilant maintenance which can be used as a gift. Could it be that for me actively grounding myself and utilizing all of the tools in

my mental health toolbox have replaced the medications with greater efficacy?

Could I be done taking things so seriously and am determined to work on the hilarious side of life? **Maybe I'm no longer satisfied with asking rhetorical questions and I'm finally working on gaining the admiration and respect of a child I still look up to.**



With such courage and conviction he had spoken the truth, the very truth I've been busy running from.

Maybe working as a Peer Support Specialist for a former provider helping others in any way I can lets me be as silly as I need to be and is at least as empowering as a career in acting or comedy could ever be. Maybe I just get a laugh out of documenting my thoughts on my smartphone while sitting on the edge of the tub in the bathroom long enough to lose feeling in my legs. At any rate I'm done with all this speculating, this

retrospective nonsense and am ready to stand up while doing my best not to fall over.

Balance is key! It's with this thought in mind I bid myself a goodnight. I'd bid you a good night as well, yet for all I know you are reading this in broad daylight and such a sentiment might seem ridiculous. It could also be that you're reading this in narrow daylight as you think the broad sort is highly overrated. What do I know? **Life is far too short to be a daylight snob... And far too important not to be taken seriously! Besides, there would be no point in me going crazy for so many years if I couldn't joke about it...** ✨

In The Silence

Paul Teerlinck

In the silence there is time
And there is no time.
In the silence the noise of the world disappears.
I get relief from my tears.
Relief from finding right or wrong,
Relief from seeming weak or strong.
Space
To let go of constricting bonds.
A place
To find a peaceful song.
I am so grateful for the silence.
My quiet friend,
I get to visit
Again and again.



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MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT LINE

877.519.7505

If you're struggling with COVID-19 related issues, we offer a **24/7 support line** staffed by Mind Springs Health professionals for support and connection to resources.

FOR ANYONE SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF COVID-19 THE COLORADO SPIRIT TEAM CAN HELP

Stressed, grieving, angry, negatively impacted by COVID-19?

FREE person-to-person and group support available.

Talk with a team member or drop-in to virtual gatherings with your peers.

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Our local outreach teams educate, inform, and support survivors in problem solving, prioritizing needs, and improving communication skills, thus empowering survivors to advocate for themselves. They speak directly with individuals, groups and organizations impacted by the pandemic, and provide referrals and other helpful information. The program is available to all COVID-19-impacted Coloradans **FREE OF CHARGE.**

All connections are done in a COVID-19 appropriate manner. If you or someone you know has been impacted by the pandemic, please connect with Colorado Spirit.



Scan QR code for more information on services and support offered by Colorado Spirit or visit MindSpringsHealth.org/Colorado-Spirit-Initiative

