

INSTILLING HOPE

STORIES OF RECOVERY

Dedicated to the resilience of
people living with mental illness



First Edition

PLEASE TAKE
with our compliments



INSTILLING HOPE

1 in 5 individuals in the United States experience mental illness in their lifetime. Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions that affect your mood, thinking and behavior. Examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia and eating disorders.

“How will I get through this?”

“What will people think?”

“Why me?”

For many, these are common thoughts after a diagnosis of a mental illness that may cause an array of emotions to arise such as fear, anger, or denial. These feelings may then progress to shame or sadness. Yet for others, a diagnosis could mean relief as they are able to put a name to their problem. Although for some it is a challenging journey, with the right treatment and support mental illnesses are quite manageable.

Recovery begins with education, support and hope.



Whether written, spoken, or shared nonverbally, a personal narrative is one of the most powerful communication tools one can use. Storytelling is also one of the world's oldest forms of art. Sharing an account on one's own journey through life draws a realistic picture of small parts of human nature. As more people share, and add to the tale, we are allowed to see humanity.

Living with mental illness can be quite a unique experience. As each person is an individual, mental illness symptoms are also unique. This makes the concept of recovery more difficult to define. There is no magic potion or sequence of words to string together to make mental illness disappear but there are numerous chances and strategies to take your power back from your diagnosis. Being in recovery doesn't necessarily mean being cured, but having the ability to manage a functional and fulfilling life in society.

Along with treatment and other coping skills, sharing stories of recovery is profoundly important. Sharing allows one to find their voice, look back into their past, and build emotional resilience through their expression.

Not only does your expression offer you relief, but helps others. Sharing gives you strength, reduces isolation, breaks the social stigma, and builds community through common experiences. Many of us understand just how common these experiences are.

As we know, healing is not linear. There may be trial and error. There may be obstacles in the way, but always remember that you are never as alone as you may believe. There is hope. On the path to recovery, hope is the understanding that there is light at the end of the darkness and the notion that brighter days lie ahead.

Your story has the ability to spark change.

Your story has the power to heal.

THE FIRST TIME I HAVE WRITTEN THE REAL TRUTH

ZEKE DeANDA

I remember my first mental breakdown. I had just gotten off work. I didn't have much money, so I was walking home. I was hearing voices. I couldn't stop or control them. They were telling me to kill myself. To be honest, I was too afraid to kill myself. They told me I was a shame to God so I should just take off all my clothes and run down the street naked. If I made it to the bridge, I should jump off. Now, I was not liking this scenario at all. But God told me to do it. I believed I was compelled to do it, so I did it. I didn't make it far; there was a roadblock waiting for me. The voices were compelling me to do more crazy stuff, so I just jumped into the back of a cop car to save myself from the voices. They didn't like that at all. The cop was laughing telling me they had the most 911 calls in the history of the city. 57 calls to 911. I didn't think it was funny and I was taking a vow of silence for eternity. It didn't last long. And everybody thought this scenario was funny. I was highly embarrassed, to tell you the truth. They actually offered to get me disability. I staunchly refused that. I was a working man. I was working at Burger King.

I got out of jail in thirty days. I went to pick up my check and to see if I still had a job. My manager thought it was funny. I didn't retain my job. I was out living in abandoned buildings and cars. Then I got two jobs, directly opposite of each other on the same street. I got two free meals a day at one job washing dishes and all the chicken I could eat at the end of the day on the other. I was living in a station wagon in the back of a car lot. Then the voices decided to tell me I had to call the police on myself for all the merchandise I stole from cars and stores. So, I happily did just that. It beats running down the street naked. So, the police pick me up, I do my time and when I got out, I immediately steal two boxes of ice cream snacks.

Next, I'm living in an abandoned building where the phone works. I'm calling places trying to find work. Suddenly, someone comes in the front door and I run out the back. A couple of days later I get caught stealing a scarf and gloves to go with my leather jacket. I do my time and it's September 11. I get a warrant for burglary for living in that abandoned building. I left my bag there with all my ID's. I know I'm dead to rights. That morning the twin towers are hit. That was crazy. Eventually, I take a plea deal for four month's boot camp.

Now, at this time, my mind is going crazy. I don't want to do these crazy things. Maybe they will go away. I just want to go home to another abandoned building. Maybe one that has the heat on, or not. Now this is the first time I have written the real truth because it's embarrassing. I'm going back and forth with these voices.



They tell me to just beat up another inmate. But I think that it's wrong to take them down with me because they will do years if they mess up this boot camp. I read in the Bible that you should greet your brother with a holy kiss. So, I just randomly kissed another inmate on the cheek. I wanted him to beat me up. I felt as if I had lost control. He pushed me and told on me. I was sad. I was locked in a huge room with the windows open that I couldn't shut for three days. All that was in there was a toilet/sink combo. I tried pouring hot water on my head; that made it worse.

Then I was transferred to another prison and was put in the hole. I never took the meds they gave me. I made them physically extricate me many times. They often pepper sprayed me and left me bloody. I was transferred to another prison. I also fought the corrections officers many times. In 2004, I sat at a TV. I self-medicated with a rock and roll channel. In 2007, they took that channel off the air. I busted up and made them pepper spray me.

After that I was put on an enforced injection of medication. I have to admit, it kind of cured me. I turned four months of boot camp into nine years in prison. I got out of prison the day before Thanksgiving in 2010. I was scared to be free. The cars were moving too fast. Everything was too busy. I went to Janet Wattles Community Mental Health Center to try getting disability. Then it was off to the races! Pretty soon I was smoking weed, living in a tent and crashing on couches. Then I learned I was on disability and that I would get a check for over \$2000.00. I thought to myself "I need to go pay that \$2000.00 I owe to get my driver's license". Instead I picked up crack. That lasted only three years, but it felt like decades.

Then one day I walked into the police station and assaulted a policeman. I assaulted even more correction officers in the county jail. I was on a mission from God. I forgot that assaulting a corrections officer means time. I went on a hunger strike. I was down to 137 pounds.



Then one day they brought me some Gatorade. Now getting Gatorade in jail is like getting water in the desert. I started eating again and they moved me to a mental health section. They didn't charge me for any of the assaults. I felt like a human being. A corrections officer even gave me a bag of coffee. I ended up getting out three times to use it at the Salvation Army Rehab. I walked back to the county jail three times because I was suicidal.

I decided to wait for an opening in a group home at Stepping Stones of Rockford. I got in on February 22, 2014. I was leery at first. I thought it was a place that nuns run, and they would make you talk about your feelings every day in a group home group. It wasn't that way at all. I could watch "R" rated movies and no nuns! I did well for a while and then I got a new case manager. I was having symptoms, but I didn't tell anybody. I was suicidal. I was homicidal. I was going crazy. So, I did the craziest thing I thought I could do. I robbed a bank naked. I just wanted them to put me away so I couldn't hurt myself. I was sick but somehow, I got out in less than four months by going through the Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP) mental health court. I got on a medication that totally worked for the first time in my life. I have little to no side effects except drooling when I'm in a deep sleep. I've been on this medication since 2014. I've been going to the gym. I've been working at a part time job. I have my own apartment and it feels like home. I still have stuff to work on but I'm in a good place. There is plenty of room for me to accomplish my dreams.



WE FOUND THAT WE WERE NOT ALONE

TRACY & CHAD BROOKS

My name is Tracy Brooks. My husband Mic & I have been married for 35 years and we have one child, a son named Chad, who turned 30 this year. We share our family's journey through mental illness in hopes that it will help other families and individuals learning to live with a mental illness.

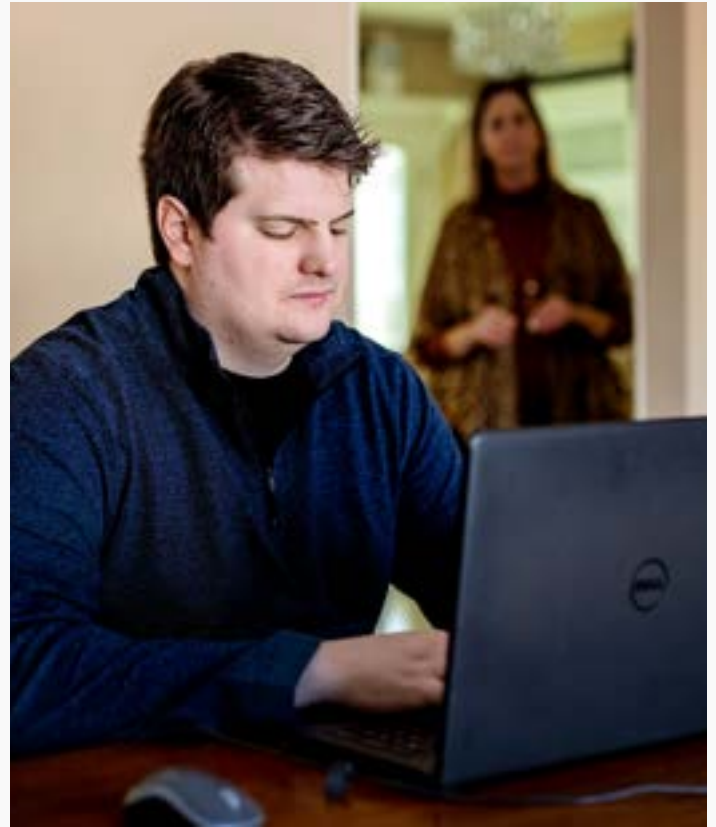
Oct. 12, 2007 is a date that I will never forget. Chad was a sophomore in high school at the time. He had missed a few days of school claiming to not feel well. After missing three days he said he was feeling better and was heading out to school on a Monday morning. He stopped right before leaving the house, he literally slumped, turned to me, and said he could not go. He then collapsed in my lap sobbing.

After a few minutes he told me that he felt like something was wrong with him, but he had no idea what it was. He told me how he felt fear at the thought of leaving the house, of being at school, or even spending time with his friends. He had been experiencing this crippling anxiety for weeks and it had reached the point where he literally could not leave the house.

I was taken off guard but assured him we would get him any type of help he needed. Ignorance was truly bliss at the time; I had no idea on that day, that the next six years would be filled with struggles I could not even imagine.

Thankfully, I also had no idea that it would be years before a correct diagnosis could be made or that it would take numerous years and medication experiments to get him well. I am also grateful that I did not know that he would become more ill, that he would suffer from a depression so great that he would have to drop out of high school, lose all his friends, and turn into a hermit living in our basement. I had no idea that simple things like taking a shower or brushing his teeth would take me begging or threatening before he could muster the will to do them.

All three of us had a difficult time staying positive and struggled to find ways to cope. As the years went by it became almost impossible to imagine Chad as the person he had been. The fear that he would never recover was overwhelming. Below Chad describes what it was like for him to experience the onset of his illness:



I remember a growing sense of fear leading up to that October day. I could not understand what was wrong with me. I was an Honor Roll student and an athlete. I had plenty of friends and had great relationships with my parents and teachers. However, the crippling anxiety I felt related to going to school every morning eventually became overwhelming. I felt startled to see myself as a failure and slowly fell into depression. It became difficult to simply get out of bed in the morning. I would sleep for twelve hours and still feel physically tired. The most disheartening aspect was that I could not understand why this was happening to me, or what I could do to change it. With physical illnesses we can usually figure out why we got sick and prevent it from happening it again. We can ice our sore joints, we take cold medicine for a cough, and we bandage our scrapes. With mental illness, there is often no reason why, and effective treatments can be difficult to find.

I was eventually diagnosed with Bipolar II disorder. It would take years, but I persevered and found the right combination of medications and therapy. I found a minimum wage job and was managing a team a couple years later. However, I decided this was not the field I wanted to be in for the rest of my life and decided to return to school. I have since graduated with an associate degree in science and will soon finish a bachelor's degree in public health. I then intend to pursue a graduate degree in the medical field.

Upon first being diagnosed, I was ashamed of myself. I lied to everyone I knew and told them I had dropped out of high school because of a bad case of pneumonia. I was afraid that I would be looked at differently. Over time I began to become more confident in myself and decided to share my story with others. I often do volunteer mental health advocacy work with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Northern Illinois and NAMI Sauk Area. Although I have become more comfortable with myself and my story, I still sometimes feel the stigma associated with mental illness. As I have embarked on a pre-medical pathway and the rigors that come with it, I have realized that the stigma still exists. Although I have a wonderful support system and have experienced incredible amounts of encouragement and reinforcement on my journey, I still feel the pressure of added - and perhaps unconscious - scrutiny. I am not perfect, yet I sometimes feel I need to be because of my illness.

I am frequently asked for advice for those struggling with their own mental health issues. Unfortunately, I do not have concrete answers. I have learned that I need to take care of myself, both mentally and physically. I do my best to eat well and exercise. At the end of each day, I keep track of what I have accomplished that day. The list is often longer than I expected. I remember some days years ago, just getting out of bed and taking a shower was a huge accomplishment. Additionally, at the end of each day I make sure to do something that makes me happy. Sometimes a simple five-minute YouTube video of an animal rescue is enough to put a smile on my face at the end of a difficult day. As I previously mentioned, I have had a stellar support system throughout my life. Through sharing my story via advocacy work, I was surprised to realize that I found similar support nearly every place I looked. While I do still occasionally feel that stigma, the overwhelming response is of uplifting encouragement.

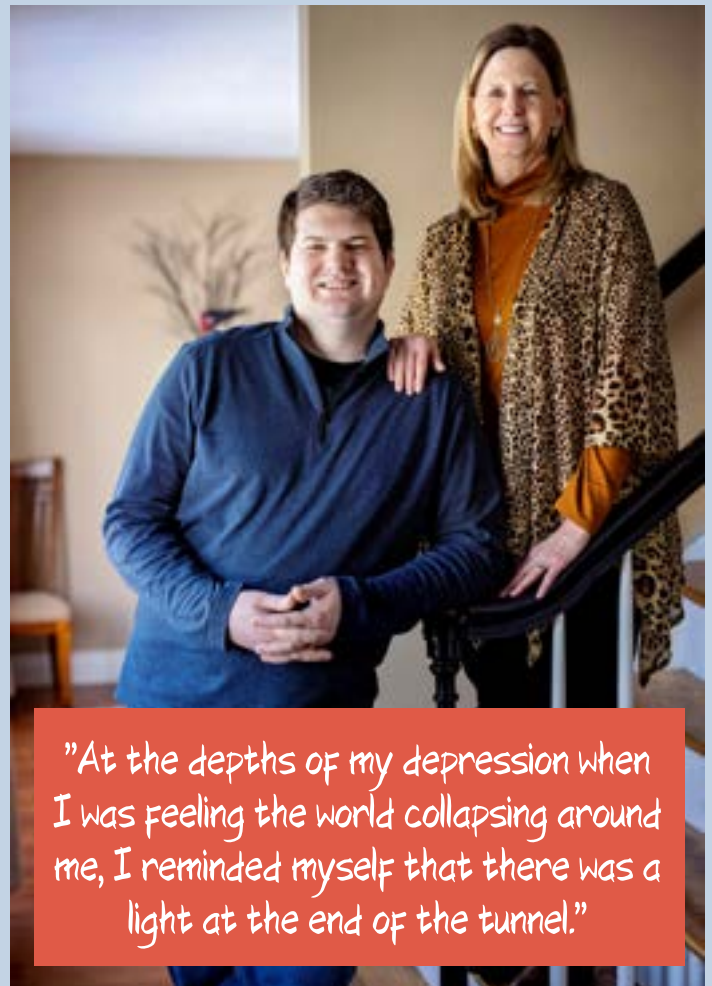
Finally, I never gave up. At the depths of my depression when I was feeling the world collapsing around me, I reminded myself that there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Even if I could only take a few steps towards that light per day, I knew I could make it there eventually."

We are so grateful that Chad is living in recovery and such a blessing to many as he shares his story of inspiration and hope. While his journey was incredibly difficult, it helped shape him into the kind, caring, and compassionate young man that he is today.

One of the key things that helped Mic & I get through the early days was NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) support groups. In the support groups we found people that understood what we were going through and learned valuable coping skills.

In addition to support groups, NAMI also has several educational programs. We attended their 12-week Family to Family class and it completely transformed the way we thought about mental illness. We learned about the many aspects of his diagnosis which helped to remove the fear associated with the unknown.

Most importantly, we found that we were not alone and that there is always, always hope. Mental illnesses are treatable, and recovery is possible!



"At the depths of my depression when I was feeling the world collapsing around me, I reminded myself that there was a light at the end of the tunnel."

RESTORED

JEANETTE TOWNS



My name is Jeanette Towns. I am a mother of two wonderful daughters. One is a nurse and the other is a business owner. I have six active grandchildren ranging in age from 2-12. Three boys and three girls. I am an avid cook. I prepare meals for my family and friends on a weekly basis. I am very close with my mother and daughters. We are in contact daily. I am a mental health advocate and activist.

In 1995, I experienced some medical malpractice. I was then diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Prior to that I had bouts of depression going back to my childhood. I didn't have a name for it back then. I thought I was just sad. I was withdrawn at times as a child. Other times I was able to enjoy a normal range of emotions. As I look back, I can now see that I was often anxious or fearful. I can remember a feeling of dread or doom. My family life was normal and what I would consider void of trauma. My feelings of sadness, dread or doom were all internal, not necessarily related to external happenings.

As the medical malpractice occurred in 1995, I subsequently experienced my very first manic episode. I was in the ER having a small stroke, known as TIA. I remember being lively and animated as I lay there. The doctor yelled out to the nurse, "She's unraveling!". This first episode landed me in a mental health facility.

I was offered a strong mood stabilizer. I was surrounded by my then husband and children. I read the paperwork with the side effects. I respectfully declined. That facility shut down permanently a few days later. I was one of the last patients. Because of the closure, I was discharged with no follow up care.

What followed next was 7-10 years of no medicine, no treatment, and no clue as to what was happening to me. I was a disaster going somewhere to happen. My behavior was so bizarre that I actually frightened my family and inner circle. I experienced wild mood swings. They ranged from manic to depressed, with everything in-between.





During my last stint in jail, I was deemed unfit to stand trial. I was remanded to a state mental facility in the forensics unit. I was there for a four month stay. I was finally given medications that worked. While there, I took note of the staff. They cared for the clients. They were attentive. I decided that I wanted to work in the mental health field- if they would have me.

Upon my release in February of 2004, I began the difficult work of recovery. I faithfully took my meds twice daily under supervision of the local treatment facility staff. I had intensive case management. Upon recovery, I was offered a fulltime position taking care of eight individuals living with mental illness. Best. Job. Ever.

After exiting the workforce, I began to hide my story due to stigma and profound shame. In the fall of 2019, I was strongly urged to share my story publicly.

As a result, I became a mental health advocate and activist. I joined NAMI Northern Illinois. I began to do public speaking. When COVID hit, my speaking switched to online. All of my family relationships have been restored. I help people through my private Facebook page entitled: Eliminating Mental Health Stigma. I'm living a life of peace and fulfillment now.

One minute I was extremely happy, but moments later I could be totally irritated by the smallest thing. I often was unable to sleep for days at a time. I would stay up at night cleaning things that were already cleaned. Music had to be loud. I began to dress differently, like I was a completely different person. On one occasion, I emptied out the family bank account on a trip to a casino. I was seemingly unable to stop gambling that day.

I had many periods of hyper sexuality. I exhibited risky behavior with multiple partners. I was homeless by choice a few times, leaving my spouse of 18 years and my children to live on the streets with unsavory characters. While manic, I divorced my first husband and married my second husband. Twice. Because I also divorced him while manic.

I was in and out of jail. In and out of various hospitals. In and out of my right mind.





I TOLD THEM I LOVED THEM

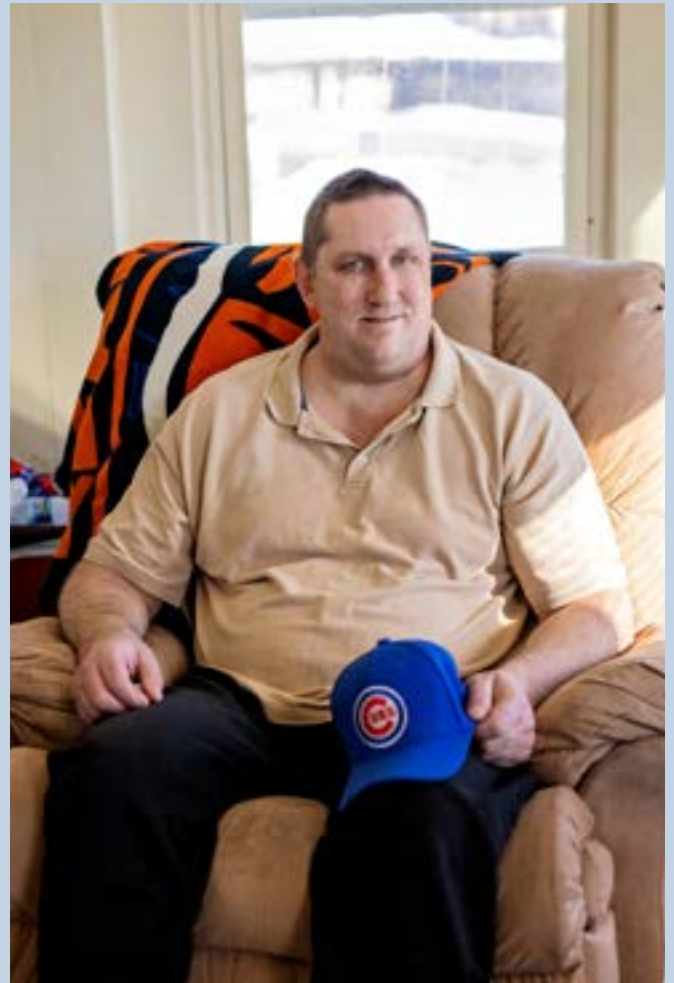


MARK SCHLUETER

My name is Mark Schlueter. I first knew that something was wrong at the age of 21. I was hearing voices. They were bad voices. They told me I was going to die. They called me names. They were yelling and screaming and got louder and louder. I was really anxious and I didn't know what to do. I would scream at the voices but it didn't help. Then I told my mom. There was a family meeting and boundaries were set that I should get treatment "or else".

In the beginning, I was struggling with the voices and wasn't taking my meds because they didn't work. I was smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. I didn't know what else to do.

I was hospitalized many times. I was at Swedish American hospital twice and Rockford Memorial three times. I was also at someplace in the Chicago suburbs. I don't remember where. I went to Janet Wattles Mental Health Center and I was in the Singer Zone Center for a time.



Then I went to Stepping Stones for my recovery. I started taking my meds, started going to groups and met a lot of friends. And my symptoms kept getting better every day. I found that if I was nice to my voices that it helped a lot. I started to verbally talk back to them. I told them I loved them. I told them I don't have to die. They became quieter and less frequent.

If it weren't for Stepping Stones, I don't know where I would be today or if I might be dead. I'm getting better and better, so I just want to thank Stepping Stones. And I just want to say I appreciate everything you have done for me. God bless you. I love you all!

I also want to thank the Stars of Light and all they have done. Thank you for giving me a chance, Stars of Light!

I just want to say, love life for everything and take it day by day. Even though I still have an illness, I know that all things are possible and can be done. And if you just try, you might be surprised.



CURRENTLY WINNING MY BATTLE

BRIAN CADMUS



I hope that by writing this recovery story, I will help or inspire at least one person. Mental illness is a lifelong struggle. One in five people suffer from some form of mental illness. It is much more common than it is made out to be. There is no magic pill that will make it instantly go away. Recovery can take years. Recovery is very complex. I can proudly say that I am mostly recovered.

I've struggled with mental illness for most of my life. I've had many diagnoses: Borderline personality disorder, major depression with psychotic features, schizoaffective disorder, OCD, etc. MY current diagnosis is Bipolar I. I also have anxiety.

I was diagnosed with ADHD when I was about five. According to my mom, I was having difficulty focusing in class. I was also very hyperactive and was exhibiting strange behaviors. I was put on ADHD medication by a psychiatrist. The medication helped a lot. Because of the ADHD, I was put in special education classes for a short time. I did so well in them, that I was taken out of them and put in regular classes.

I started to face other problems when I entered junior high school. At that time, I started to be bullied. The bullying was horrible. It made me feel very helpless, hopeless, and worthless. Bullying is not just a part of life or a right of passage. It is a trauma. I have experienced much trauma in my life.

Because of the bullying, I became very depressed and withdrawn. Depression is, to me, like being at the bottom of a very deep hole, having no way out. The hole is filling up with water, and you doubt that you'll make it out alive.

I did not tell anybody about the bullying, depression, or any of my traumas for years. If I could go back in time and tell myself anything, it would be "seek help for your problems and don't let people mistreat you." I started to self-harm and think of suicide at this time. I also began to suffer from anxiety.

I sought help when I was sixteen or so.

I told a teacher about my depression. The school contacted my mother. Because of this, I started seeing a therapist. I was put on antidepressants by my psychiatrist. I did not really talk to my therapist. I hardly talked at all to anybody. I didn't have friends at this point in time. I did not have friends again until I was about nineteen.

I started to come out of my shell when I was about nineteen. I got off the ADHD medication at this time. I got a new psychiatrist when I came to Stepping Stones. He did not think that I had ADHD. Perhaps I had outgrown it. He diagnosed me with bipolar disorder.

Also, when I was nineteen or so, I had to be hospitalized because of severe depression and suicidality. I was going to college at the time. I was studying to be a veterinary technician. The coursework was very hard. I was not on the right medication for my bipolar disorder.

Because of my hospitalization and current mental state, I dropped out of college. I look forward to going back to school at some point in the future.



I have pathetically attempted suicide several times. I had my first manic and psychotic episode when I was about twenty-one. I was hearing voices. I was also having hallucinations and delusions. I did not sleep for several days. According to my mom, I jumped out of a second story window because I thought someone was chasing me.

I have had four or five manic/psychotic episodes in my life. I have not had one since 2016. I credit that to being on the right medication.

I have been doing pretty well since 2016. I am living on my own. I am on the right medication now. I have a job that I enjoy and excel at. I am looking forward to going back to college.

I know that mental illness is a battle that I will have to fight for the rest of my life. I am currently winning that battle.

Hi, I'm Tracy.

Bipolar befriends me, anxiety annoys me, borderline personality traits try to describe me- again hi, I'm Tracy.

Since I was a young girl I had trouble being still, concentrating and focusing for very long. I would have highs and lows. In my high mode I had had an abundance of ideas, energy, and creativity. I required little sleep. In my low mode I had no energy and no motivation. I was put on Ritalin and diagnosed with ADHD. My parents became worried because my mood swings became too much. So, I was taken off of the medication.

I had my first breakdown when I was 14 or 15 years old. I had low self-esteem and was not functioning properly because of the many things that had happened in my life. I started withdrawing from the people I loved and my life in total. I was detached immeasurably from others and was in extreme emotional pain. I no longer had a will to live.

After this, my parents admitted me to the hospital where I stayed for what seemed like forever. At the end of my first stay, I was diagnosed with Bipolar II with Borderline tendencies and PTSD.

The doctor decided it was not a good idea to live with my mom which led me to live with my dad and his new girlfriend. My parents had separated during my hospital stay. I blamed myself for their separation, and later their divorce, for years! If only I hadn't gotten sick. I later worked through it and accepted it wasn't my fault.

After receiving my diagnosis, I thought of it as an addition to the many things I had been through. At first I had difficulty understanding, but I felt better. I had new medication and a new journey to begin.



Bipolar has always tried to befriend me.

If you've ever lost your direction in the rain, on your way to a place you never wanted to go in the first place- you could start to understand what it's like to live with bipolar.

Over the next 30 years, I was hospitalized three other times. I kept following the same unhealthy habits, behaviors, and relationships. I had to call the police on myself three different times within a few weeks for help. Being in the darkest place I had ever been taught me a lesson:

I had to start taking my recovery seriously.

Acceptance of my illness and what I need to do to stay well is my way out of Hell. I had to learn what worked for me. DBT coping skills, medication management, supported living, accountability, volunteer work with NAMI Northern Illinois and the Stars of Light, art, humor, faith, and talk therapy are all a big part of my recovery.

Being in this present moment is a gift.
I am a millionaire-
but not that kind of millionaire.

Stepping Stones of Rockford, Inc. is a private, nonprofit 501c3 community mental health center dedicated to serving adults with serious mental illness. The organization first opened in 1969 with a single halfway house, but currently the center offers a variety of mental health treatment interventions and access to 24-hour services.

The staff at Stepping Stones often hear that it is a “best kept secret” in the surrounding area. As they have continued to develop programs, expand group homes, and secure apartments, their presence in the community has expanded.

Growth and recognition has allowed the organization to serve hundreds of individuals and their families, and to become Northern Illinois’ leading provider of residential psychiatric rehabilitation for adults with serious, persistent mental illnesses.

“The only difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is the way in which we use them.”

Stepping Stones’ experience in meeting the housing and recovery needs of those with serious mental illness is considerable. Through mental health services and programs, Stepping Stones helps those we serve to break the cycle of psychiatric hospitalization, decrease homelessness, and encourage positive involvement in the criminal justice system. Persons with serious mental illness are able to live as independently as possible within their community setting of choice.

Stepping Stones is a trauma-informed, person-centered mental health treatment provider. But, they’re so much more than that. Their residents are not their diagnoses. They recognize the person, not the illness. The organization works to bust stigma, to make positive contribution in the community and to provide safe, affordable and decent housing.

Stepping Stones staff validate that persons with serious mental illness have the right to a quality of life afforded by the least restrictive living environment. They are a part of our community. They are a family.

For more information and donations:

815-963-0683

steppingstonesrockford.org

Like us on Facebook: [@steppingstonesrockford](https://www.facebook.com/steppingstonesrockford)





Stars of Light is a program of Stepping Stones that uses dramatic and visual arts to promote recovery, educate the public about mental illness and reduce the stigma that surrounds it. They enhance the quality of life in our community and across Winnebago and Boone Counties with artistic products that educate as well as entertain.

Through the artistry of the directors and participants, public fear of mental illness is alleviated and barriers are broken down to understanding and acceptance. Participants include people with mental illness and other community members.

The Stars of Light began in 1995 as a travelling theatre troupe, a program of Janet Wattles Mental Health Center. The group has evolved for many years under the direction of Mary Gubbe Lee and Steven F. Vrtol III. The Stars have gone from being a live theatre troupe to a comprehensive program that includes all artistic venues and promotes recovery from mental illness through inclusion in the arts.

Artistic Director, Steve, is a professional actor and psychosocial rehab professional. Steve directs tour shows and radio shows, writes material and conducts client groups using the expressive arts. The Stars are his inspiration and his teachers.

Mary has been with the Stars since 1995. She serves as stage mom, producer, driver and actress. The people in the troupe are her inspiration and provide her with the fortitude to work in behavioral health.

The Stars of Light regularly collaborates with NAMI Northern Illinois, Rosecrance, Shelter Care Ministries, churches, clubs and organizations on their projects.

Make sure to check out the Stars of Light YouTube Channel featuring personal stories, tour shows, musical pieces and art galleries: <https://tinyurl.com/18o96325>

Like us on Facebook: tinyurl.com/16sp5xkv



DEPRESSION IS A LEADING CAUSE OF
DISABILITY WORLDWIDE

SUICIDE IS THE 2ND LEADING CAUSE OF
DEATH AMONG PEOPLE AGED 10-34

50% OF ALL LIFETIME MENTAL ILLNESS
BEGINS BY AGE 14, AND 75% BY AGE 24

AT LEAST 8.4 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE
U.S. PROVIDE CARE TO AN ADULT WITH A
MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL PROBLEM

20.5% OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS IN THE U.S. HAVE A
SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

37% OF ADULTS INCARCERATED IN THE
STATE AND FEDERAL PRISON SYSTEM
HAVE A DIAGNOSED MENTAL ILLNESS

70.4% OF YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE
JUSTICE SYSTEM HAVE A DIAGNOSED
MENTAL ILLNESS

ONLY 43.8% OF U.S. ADULTS WITH
MENTAL ILLNESS RECEIVED TREATMENT
IN 2019



NAMI Northern Illinois is an active affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. What started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 has blossomed into the nation's leading voice on mental health. NAMI Northern Illinois is dedicated to improving lives of individuals and families living with mental illness through support, education, advocacy and hope.

Since 1984, NAMI Northern Illinois has been serving Winnebago, Boone and surrounding counties in the region.

NAMI members listen.

They support those in need through various peer-led groups.

They educate families and the community.

They advocate by helping to shape public policy and programming for people with mental illness and their families.

They lead awareness events and activities to actively fight stigma, encourage understanding, and keep in the forefront the importance of mental health care.

They provide the tools and resources necessary to improve response to mental illness for all.





“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”

— Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

STORIES OF RECOVERY

Each year, millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. If you're impacted, know that recovery is possible and there are people ready and willing to help you on your journey.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

DAWN WULF PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography produced by Dawn Wulf Photography



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