

“Moving from Darkness”

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I remember being in a very dark place. It was a time when I experienced feelings of worthlessness and intense sadness which was debilitating. It affected all areas of my life, including my work and my relationships and it felt like a hole I could never get out of. It was difficult even to get up and get outside. But a crisis woke me up. I came to realize that I had to fight to get my life back and that there were things that I needed to do to take of myself.

I learned that I had to get up every day, no matter how I felt and I had to get outside and stop isolating, living in my head. I started to become medication compliant and started to use the coping skills that I had learned in therapy. My perspective changed and I began to have hope and this kept my going even during setbacks. I learned to focus on the positive, especially the positive things I had accomplished and the good qualities that showed to me that I am worthwhile and worthy of love. I turned to my support network and began to build new relationships with people. I embraced the fact that much of life was outside of my control, but that there were little things I could do each day to move in a positive direction. Taking care of small responsibilities gave me the courage to tackle the bigger ones and in time I felt healthy and ready to face the world again.

By turning my attention away from myself and towards the needs of others, I found that I had a renewed purpose. Eventually, the opportunity arose for me to become a peer support specialist. It was in this moment that I realized that I could take my experiences, what I learned from my illness and recovery, and use them to help others. I now feel joy. I realize that I have to stay vigilant and manage my symptoms every day, remaining medication compliant and paying attention to how I'm feeling. I still face difficulties at times, both life difficulties and those related to my illness, but now I am applying the tools I have learned and I live each day forward with faith, hope, and love.