

Share Your Story

Example #1

The Grip of Mental Illness

I am: an advocate for mental wellness.

I want to share my story because: I want to break the stigma of psychosis and anorexia for others who may also be suffering. After struggling with an eating disorder for five years, I thought I had my mental health under control. However, after graduating college in Washington, I returned to California—the place where my battle with anorexia began. Yet again, the familiar symptoms of Anorexia emerged, along with new symptoms I had never experienced before.

This is how my life was affected by early signs and symptoms: I experienced disturbing hallucinations and became obsessed with healing treatments like Epsom salt floating and massage therapy believing they would make me more pure and desirable. My behavior revealed all the typical symptoms of psychosis. I withdrew into my own world in which I constantly felt threatened by everyone and everything around me. I lashed out at family and friends in-person and on social media. I demanded that my dad take down mirrors, paintings and artwork. I constantly accused family members of stealing my belongings. All the while, I limited my eating and lost weight. My family and friends were at a loss on how to help me.

These were my feelings and how I saw myself:

I felt misunderstood yet scared. I felt undeserving of help. I saw myself as a worthless, annoying nuisance that wasn't worth anyone's time.

Events that supported my decision/motivated me to get help:

In the fall of 2015, the crisis I was in continued to build up. My parents eventually found me pacing in our kitchen in the early hours of the morning mumbling and incoherent. My dad immediately called 911 and I was eventually driven to the emergency room in handcuffs by a crisis team. The doctors found that I had drank such a huge amount of water that it caused extreme changes to my body chemistry. Essentially, I had drank such a dangerous amount of water, I began to overdose. At the intensive care unit, I suffered a seizure while my mom held me. This catastrophe led to the diagnosis of Psychosis in addition to Anorexia. It also led me to want to improve my well-being.

Details of my assistance (how, who, where, when, and what):

With the support of my family and friends, I packed my belongings and moved into a treatment center in South Florida. Their approach was to focus on managing my psychosis rather than working on my eating disorder. Being that it was so different from anything I'd ever experienced, I was open to trying it and it worked! The transition from what I was experiencing then to what I am experiencing now took a full year.

This is how I learned to manage my mental health problem/illness, challenges, stigma, and/or coping strategies:

I managed my mental health problem/illness by accepting medication. I am no longer suspicious of meds because I felt them work. They were able to silence the voices in my head and helped my emotional state. I realize now they make a difference. Additionally, when faced with challenges, I found that bonding with others in support groups helped me break down barriers that had me isolated for years. They also reduced stigma around my diagnosis because I was able to share how I truly felt, get valuable feedback, and realize that I am not alone. Interacting with peers was also a great coping strategy.

Now I am:

Now I am much more willing to accept and manage my illness. As a graduate student, I share my experiences with others who have experienced similar mental health issues as I have.

This is my message and plans for the future:

One key message I would like readers to take away from my journey is that there will be fears, doubts, and setbacks, but you have to keep going. It won't be an easy journey, but you will get there. Additionally, surround yourself with friends and family that want to see you improve. These relationships are a must when going through recovery.

My plans for the future are to continue writing about the dark places I endured and how I overcame them. I also write to continue breaking the stigma of psychosis and anorexia. Lastly, I want to continue making mental wellness a lifestyle.