

Share Your Story

Example #2

From Suicidal Ideation to Hope

I am: A successful person with Bipolar.

I want to share my story because:

I want to share my story because I want others who have struggled as I have to know that there is hope. As a young girl, I was driven by academic and professional accomplishments. Most importantly, I sought financial wealth. These markers were particularly important to me as the daughter of parents who immigrated to this country. I saw financial success as a measure that exceeded cultural barriers and enough of it would establish my worth in this country.

Thus, I diligently worked toward this dream. I excelled in school, completed college, then law school. Eventually, I became an investment banker to have even greater earning power.

Throughout my early 20s, my life was work and nothing else. I was proud to call myself a workaholic. I saw this as the meaning of success. Eventually, my body and mind began to feel drained all the time and I began to feel as if my youth was passing me by. My views began to shift.

This is how my life was affected by early signs and symptoms:

My first symptoms of my Bipolar Disorder began when I constantly felt dissatisfied. I was confronted with the realities of my investment banking career goal. I realized I was working toward a dream that made me miserable. Everything felt meaningless. I did not have a back-up plan so I was not able to redirect my time and energy to another career goal. Depression then consumed me. I felt hopeless. I then experienced my first manic episode. I then experienced a few more. I felt like my life had been hijacked. I was finally diagnosed with "bipolar." I tried to dismiss this diagnosis and convinced myself that it was not a part of me. I did not want to come to terms with it. Consequently, this refusal led me to self destruction.

These were my feelings and how I saw myself:

I began to believe I was limited in life. I was flawed. I accepted what society thought of mental illness. I thought I could never have a high powered career and would be destined for failure. I felt like I disappointed my family, especially my spouse and parents. I was embarrassed, ashamed and hopeless.

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

I began to push people away and refused help. I stopped talking to my spouse and parents. I rejected calls from friends and completely isolated myself. In time, I felt helpless and felt I had no reason to live. I no longer wanted to feel my suffering in which I was convinced could never

stop. I was left considering suicide as the only solution. My suicidal ideation gradually increased and took over my mind.

Finally, after being hospitalized due to a manic episode, I learned about peer-based support. Additionally, I was made aware of examples of other people living functional and happy lives with mental illness.

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

My assistance after deciding to seek help consisted of a network of peers, a community, that was diverse and vibrant, and successful in many ways. They inspired me with their journeys. They helped me on a new path to find meaning and purpose in my life. My connection to them also helped me combat my suicidal ideations.

This is how I learned to handle my Mental Health Problem/illness, challenges, stigma, and/or coping strategies:

Now, when confronted with issues with my mental illness, I seek support from my peer group. They remind me of my life's purpose, and that is to inspire others and help them see that recovery from mental illness is real and achievable. Additionally, I have come to realize the importance of friends of family. As a coping strategy, I seek out help from my loved ones and found it has had a profound effect on my health. Lastly, learning about my mental illness has helped better understand the risks, especially suicide, of bipolar disorder while removing the stigma surrounding it. I am not complacent or dismissive of the risks and I have grown to respect the seriousness of my illness. Educating myself has allowed me to take more responsibility for my mental illness, such as prioritizing treatment.

Now I am: a mental health advocate and writer. In my writing, I show how I manage and cope with my mental illness.

This is my message and plans for the future:

The key message I want others to take away from my journey is that success in career is doing something that makes you happy. Additionally, without strong relationships, there is no happiness or success. Lastly, in order to live well with mental illness, you must understand the mental illness. With that being said, I plan to create my own online community and blog to show that there is hope. Additionally, I aim to help people understand mental illness and help others find true meaning in their life, because this is what adds true meaning in my life.