



Time Passes, Don't Let Your Gratitude

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more information at
www.namistl.org,
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314-962-4670.

Happy New Year everyone! 2017 is of our past and 2018 has now begun. 2017 was quite a teacher for me with two losses to persons dying in my life, a relative now in hospice, and the NAMI St. Louis office moved from Brentwood to Maryland Heights. All of these issues consist of major changes and the above are just a few. So what 2017 has taught me is that nothing lasts forever and we're vulnerable to change. Yes, time stands still for no one, we must take inventory of our many blessings and be thankful.

Speaking for myself, as a person with mental illness, it's very easy to overlook those blessings such as those special friends and loved ones in our life who support us. Yes, time passes. Don't let your gratitude go unheard in 2018.

Mom, I appreciate our time together; happy birthday, Sharon; thanks for letting me bend your ear, Ann; and thanks for bringing lots of joy into my life, J.B.; etc.!

Please don't forget to show your gratitude to NAMI St. Louis. There's several ways-volunteering, participating in the NAMIWalk on May 5 and the NAMI St. Louis Gala next fall. You can also submit an article for this newsletter.

Christopher Lee

Chair Peer Advisory Committee

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"There is a calmness to a life lived in gratitude, a quiet joy."

- Ralph H. Blum -

A Personal Story

By Anonymous

I've spent 10 years as an EMT. I've also been a 911/police/fire/ems dispatcher for the same amount of time. In 2016 I ended up having a rough year. I was all over the place mood wise, going into work late, calling out and flat out not caring. I was getting written up for being late, with the one supervisor asking why I was going downhill. Finally, one day I walked into the office and cried "I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm drinking all hours, but not on the job and I just don't care." I was handed FMLA forms and voluntarily went to an outpatient program to get the help I needed.

I spent the first of 3 months annoyed with myself for going, hating myself for receiving the news of my new found medical issues, and having to now look at people—seeing their pain, no longer just hearing it. I cried and stated I didn't want to do this anymore, I couldn't handle it.

After speaking with the counselor and feeling awful about my reactions. I told her I felt a weight lifted off my shoulders and would spend the next day apologizing to everyone. It was at that moment I really felt like I needed to put my best foot forward. I learned a lot. At this outpatient program, it wasn't about having a mental illness or disability and dealing with it, but a matter of coping and incorporating it into a person's everyday living. I was also getting into trouble for still being concerned with others at the program rather than focusing on myself. However, this function, I couldn't just shut off.

Unfortunately, I didn't get paid for a month and begged to go back to work sooner under the agreement I finish my program. I went back feeling nervous, anxious and every other negative feeling you could think. I had a coordinator that already didn't like me and denied my request for 40 hr. work week (despite seeing the doctors heading of what she does) and forced me into signing more FMLA. I worked a non-stress part time job to help assist in the loss of income and because of this—she off work hours set her sights on firing me. I had a union that thought I was overreacting over the whole ordeal and forced me to apologize because everyone that does will be fine. I was never suspended or had ever faced such harsh reactions—that everything I worked so hard for to fix so I could get back to my old self at work was beginning to fall apart again. My union chief steward, whom I thought was a friend, kept telling me to "have a few beers, love the pups, you're overreacting, just apologize." I was alone and devastated.

Needless to say, upon a sit-down, what I thought was private matters, my medical history was read and I broke down crying. I was then deemed unfit, forced into an apology only to still be let go. I felt tossed aside like a piece of trash. It took until June to tell my friends and family about things start to finish. I kept thinking how if I never went for help I'd be okay. My mother felt awful because I was going through this alone. I pushed my friends away. I told them until I could understand, stop hating myself, and come to terms—there was no reason to discuss anything. My mother once said, "Look at the field you work in—you may not be suicidal, but who's to say I wouldn't be burying you if you didn't get help."

Continued on page 4.

Rock and Sand

By Jennifer Marzucio

As the tide ebbs and flows, so do my emotions. I feel like I'm sometimes thrust into a rocky shore, and I feel as if I'm being saved and pulled away with the tide to a sandy beach with warm waves and sunny skies.

I live in the sun, I live in the rain.

When the sky is sunny, things are good. I have good relationships, I am friendly and outgoing. I enjoy the sun on my face, and the wind in my hair. I listen to my music loud and I sing along. I look people in the eye, disregard those who don't like me because I know there are many that do. I do not feel alone. I do not feel like a failure. I feel more "normal". I cook, I clean, and I get out of the house. I smile to strangers I've never met. I want to enjoy life and seek out things I love. I seek out nature. I enjoy small things, like getting wet when my dogs shake on me after swimming, watching the birds fly, the smell of BBQ, the feel of the river on my skin, and just sitting and watching nature around me. I love to hear children, or anyone for that matter, laugh and it makes me want to laugh even though I don't know the joke. I feel God's presence and rejoice in his glow. I pray for people going through hard times that I know and for those that I don't. I have faith in myself, and know that I can become a whole person again. I don't act carelessly or recklessly. I don't argue, I don't fight, I don't have that horrible pain in my gut where the bad behaviors start. I tell people positive things. I enjoy seeing people, I laugh and I am happy.

When I live in the rain, I hide. I hide from others and from myself. I lose my faith in God and feel he kept me alive all those years ago to punish me for all my wrong doings day after day after day. I dwell and live in the past. I dwell on the people I hurt, my kids, my parents, my ex-husband, the rest of my family. Thanks that when it was sunny I had let go of. I argue, I don't look people in the eye, and I keep to myself. My emotions are raw from the things I think and the way I feel about myself. That makes it easy to lash out at people to try to "protect" myself. My feelings are exposed, and I feel that if anyone saw the true, raw me, no matter how much they loved me, they would run away from my ugliness. I say things I don't mean to try to control or hurt others. I react quickly to things, not thinking about the repercussions of my actions. I feel hopeless. I wish I was dead. I feel physical pain in my gut and in my heart. I push away anyone who holds out a helping hand. All I want to do is be at home with all the window shades pulled down, so no one can see me. I take pills or drink to sleep the days away. 24 hours seems like 24 days. I feel as if I didn't do this I would never get through the days. I feel so alone and defenseless. I always inadvertently do things to make myself feel worse through my words and actions, and I don't even realize I am doing them. During the rainy times, I don't care who I hurt, and honestly I want to hurt someone else so badly so they feel as bad as I do. So I'm not alone in my pain. I wish there was a way someone could walk in my shoes to understand me. I don't want people to help me. I don't want to hear the same phrases people use to "cheer you up". We all know what they are. It's not that easy. I didn't ask to feel this way, I didn't ask for this disease, and I despise it. WHY ME?? What did I do?? I feel punished, I hate life. I'm being thrown against the rocks with each wave. I am broken and defeated.

Continued on page 5.

The Wild Wood Flower

By Scott Galvon

There is a wild wood flower growing by a tree because of all the rain showers.
She stands on the ballfield. I stood on the outfield grass wanting to embrace her at last.
We were both nine. We went to the same school. She rang my chimes.
So excited to kiss and embrace her. Sally made me feel fine.
45 years pass by. I saw her at Riverview High School reunion. She was not a bit shy.
She hugged me real close and we both took a toast.
She was a great host. I loved her the most at age nine and now I am 63.
She is still fine.



She's the wild wood flower.
I am so glad to see her again many years later.
When I was young I used to date her.
Isn't that great sir.
I'll always love her that's for sure.
She's the wild wood flower.
She brings happiness every hour.

Personal Story Continued

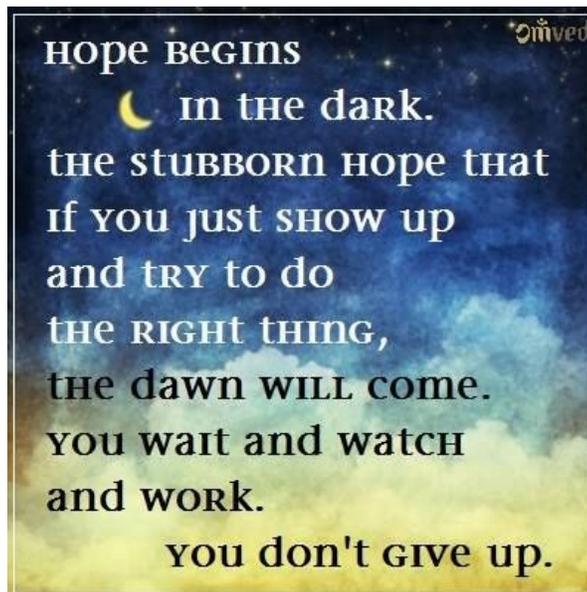
I am fighting for my job back and justice. However, I am currently working, still providing services as a dispatcher for 911's. I am more vocal and open about my illnesses. I am pursuing a Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling/ Substance Abuse/ Behavioral studies because I know I can do more to help others than just sitting behind a desk. I have made progress in opening up to my friends and having them see what I'm going through. My mom and sister support me fully and I have a boyfriend that doesn't see me for my issues, but for the person he's known me to be.

That's the best part about my whole situation. I'm fighting for others, especially in the emergency personnel (dispatchers) field since we rarely go noticed. I want others to know: It's OK to have these issues and shouldn't be worried what others think or not feeling strong enough. The reality is you're not alone.

I now see that despite these issues, I'm still me. I'm human. I'm still that strong, persistent, resilient, feisty, loving, crazy redhead. So, I had a bad year and fell off the beaten path. I came back a fighter and now speak openly for others in any way I can. I'm still doing well. I'm getting married next year and I still have the roof over my head and my health.

Hope Begins in the Dark

By Anne Lamott



Rocks and Sand Continued

Then something positive happens. Sometimes I know what it is, sometimes I don't. I just know I feel better, and the waves carry me away from the rocks and take me to the sandy shore in the sun.

I wish I could live in the middle. Learn to protect myself from the rocks. Find and wear a special suit to be able to bounce off the rocks if I get thrown into them so they won't hurt me anymore. I want to live in the light, so many things are better in the light.

I have to figure out how to blend the darkness and the light, myself and the illness, so that we can live together in this one body I have. Neither I nor the illness are going away, so we need to figure this out. This is my mission.

I hate the rocks. I hate the rain. I love the light and love the feel of the sand on my feet, the warm waves that surround me, and the sun on my face.

I know I won't always be in the light, but I want to find a way to spend more time there than with the rocks.

August 22, 2017

Jennifer Marcuzo has a diagnosis of bipolar-2. She attempted suicide in 2009 and believes the reason she was saved is to help other people with mental illness.



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Newsletter Mission:

The newsletter, established by the NAMI St. Louis Consumer Advisory Committee, will tell the stories of individuals with mental illness who are doing interesting things. It is a forum for information, inspiration, and creative expression.

Publication Guidelines

- Materials should be from individuals living with mental illness in the St. Louis area, unless invited by the Consumer Advisory Committee.
- In an attempt to decrease stigma and isolation that often accompany mental illness, we ask that you identify yourself by providing your name, address, and either phone number or email address. You will be contacted if there are questions about your material. You will also be contacted if your material or question is published. Names will be published, but no other identifying information will be made public.
- Items for publication should be free from profanity or language that is prejudicial toward any culture, race, religion, gender, type of mental illness, or type of disability.
- Submission does not guarantee publication. Items are published at the discretion of the Consumer Advisory Committee.
- Please keep stories, articles, and poetry to two pages or less. Please do not send originals as they will not be returned.
- Submissions may be made by email, U.S. Mail, or fax.

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