

Mental illness is real; it's not a cop out

by Lea in Arkansas

I was the next to the youngest out of five kids. I did graduate from school, but I struggled. I really didn't have time to make friends in school because I tried so hard just to pass. When school was out, I went home and slept!

When I wasn't sleeping, I was working around the house doing things my mom and dad wanted us to do. I was very happy growing up but I was sheltered. I was the type of kid who always wanted to make everyone happy. The problem with my mental illness, which my doctor says is major depression, is I don't retain information.

I think growing up and going to school when everyone was learning, I was in my own little world being depressed. My thinking isn't like everyone else's. I've been struggling since I was 19 and I'm 40 today. I've struggled with suicide.

I have two kids, one 19 and the other is 20. They both go to college. I can't see any mental illness in either of them. They are very smart and work very hard. When I go out in public, everyone sees this very happy person; no one sees me struggling but my family. It's hard on all my family. No one wants to understand people like me. I've been so bad that I thought cancer would be so much easier because at least you died with cancer.

When you're trapped in your brain and struggling each minute you wish you could die but you don't. I thank God because I am stable now and it's not as bad as it was. Now I am learning to interact with people and it's fun showing my feelings. I'm starting to be a whole person.

I've been on disability for 10 years and I have Medicare for insurance. I'm thankful to have it. Mental illness runs in our family but I'm thankful my kids are fine. What I want people to know about mental illness is that it's real; it's not a cop out. There are so many people who have a form of mental illness but they start using drugs, etc... With me, school should have talked about self-esteem, confidence, and all that stuff you should learn at home, but coming from a large family when both parents work, it's hard. I feel self-esteem and confidence is just as important as English, math or science because kids who don't make good grades need positive self-esteem lessons. Everyone is special, not just the ones who makes straight A's, like my kids.

Education has a lot to do with mental illness and the family they come from does, too. Most of all, if you do have a form of mental illness there is hope. It's a lot of work but it can be done; I'm proof!!!! Don't do drugs or start drinking. Go get help! Get on medication and start living the life God wants you to live.