

Struggling and surviving

by Leya in West Virginia

Manic depression has ruined my life in so many ways. I have suffered a divorce, lost many jobs and had to change my life path because of this disorder. I planned as an adolescent to become an attorney. I was an honor student with real potential. Then manic depression set in. As a result, I became a failing student and was left to attend a business school rather than a four-year university.

Now I have spent most of my adult life as a secretary (when I could stand to hold a job). As a teen, I didn't know what was wrong with me and neither did anyone else, but at the age of 19, I was finally diagnosed as bipolar.

At this time, I do not have health care coverage because I am not working due to my condition. There isn't any help for me here in rural West Virginia. As a result of not having insurance, I am now backing myself off of my medication because I can no longer afford it. My life is miserable and as a result, I make everyone else around me miserable. People do not understand me, even my closest family members. I feel trapped. I have nowhere to turn.

Sometimes I think, if I hurt myself then maybe I will get someone's attention, some kind of help. The only thing I know to do is try to be a mental health advocate. I have nothing else. If I could change one thing about how people think about mental illness it would be that it would be recognized by society as a major epidemic in this country. Then maybe all people like me could get the help we need. We could become productive in society again and lead happy, healthy lives.