

Dangerous? Maybe only to a system that doesn't work...

by Hope in Arizona

I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder when I was 28 years old and was found ripping a Bible in a church. I had never expressed anger before, having grown up in a dysfunctional household. My parents abused drugs, and I was subject to activities that one might read about in newspapers but never admit to. I had experienced so many traumas in my life that I was good at blocking memories from my mind entirely.

Just prior to my first of six hospitalizations in 11 years, I had been raped by two men, but it took me nearly 10 years to remember the life-threatening incident. All subsequent hospitalizations have occurred as I have remembered and relived those nightmares. For example, I acted like a two-year old, pounding my fist on the wall when I had heard a noise that had reminded me of when my father had tried to kill me in a drunken rage. Later that day, when my husband was told that I was being released from the emergency room, he was so desperate to get me some help that he decided to fantastically stretch the truth to get a court-order for evaluation.

His false allegations, which never had to be proven beyond a reasonable doubt, led to a judge deeming me a danger to society. Since my filing charges against my husband, whom I love, would cause him to have a felony on his record, leaving him virtually unemployable while I am on SSD, I choose instead to pray daily for forgiveness. I also pray that the 18 of 27 Basic Human Rights, which are stripped from those who are deemed mentally ill, be restored.

During the last hospitalization, I watched in horror as an intelligent and ambitious young woman, Alicia, lay on the floor turning blue from a medication overdose as doctors ran over to merely take her pulse, in accordance with the Do Not Resuscitate order in effect at the county hospital. In vain, I have been asking my insurance company for psychotherapy for more than five years. I have always been a very strong woman, and I must continue to take my strength from God, my husband, and my friends.

I have attended Fordham University Graduate School of Business in New York, and Arizona State University. I hold a B.A. in Political Science from Lehman College, City University of New York, from which I graduated with honors. I speak five languages, including Japanese, yet I could not work for years as I had become addicted to every non-addictive sleeping pill on the market.

I used to run five miles, bicycle fifteen miles, and swim twenty laps on a regular basis but medication caused me to gain 150 pounds and I developed diabetes. Because of that, I won a class-action lawsuit, but I still struggle with my weight.

Today, I volunteer in the community and am writing two books on 12-step recovery, which has saved my life. I am also the C.E.O. for a new corporation, which just got its first million-dollar investor. My closest friends only know that I have been deemed mentally ill if and when I choose to disclose that to them. Most of all, I have lots of love in my heart. Dangerous? Maybe only to a system that doesn't work.