

## Learning to trust others and forgive himself

by Forgotten Dad in Washington

First and foremost, I am a survivor. How has this disease affected my life? I have had difficult times with relationships. I keep everyone at a distance. Even those who I know I can trust. Trust is a big issue. I can count the number of people I trust on one hand. And even with those people there are doubts of trust.

My first marriage was doomed from the start. I knew 3 months into the marriage that it would not last. But being a God-fearing Christian, I stayed in the marriage until my wife betrayed me for another man. I was faithful in my marriage. But during the 12 years I was married I tried to kill myself at least four times.

On the job, my depression cost me promotions as I could not get a handle on my emotions. I would be up and down in my feelings. I could not control them. So I would get passed over for promotions or turn them down because I knew I would fail. The last suicide attempt I had was 3 years ago in April. I was working and wanted to hurt myself really badly. I told a fellow supervisor what I was thinking and was called into the office where I had a confrontation with my managers. They wanted me to get help. I am thankful for that confrontation. It saved my life.

I did not have insurance and the local area had few resources for the uninsured or under insured. I was able to get into a local mental health facility that really changed my thinking. I will never forget my counselor, Kristin.

Sadly this story does not have a totally happy ending. The manager who saved my life could not save his own and completed suicide one year after saving my life. Life has cruel ironies.

And then there are those in the Christian community who feel mental illness is a spiritual problem, not a real problem. My wife went to the leaders in my faith and told them how I was and that I was in really bad shape. Not one of them approached or cared to see how I was. They avoided me at all costs. Why? I am not mind reader, but all I can think of is they believed I was spiritually damaged goods in God's view. I was not worthy of being spoken too, prayed with or any other type of help. I was shunned instead of helped.

If you are a religious leader, mental illness is not spiritual. If I had been in a wheelchair with some disease, you would have helped me. But because it's in my head, you see me as unfaithful, not trusting in God. How wrong you are. My life now is still full of pain and regrets. The one person I learned to forgive was me. Then I forgave my sexual predators (there were 2). I still have many ups and downs. I am married to an incredible woman who loves me despite my shortcomings. Mental illness is that -- an illness. Help yourself. Help others.