

My Personal Depression

My journey

My battles

This is a very difficult Blog to write. For most of my life depression was the illness that had to be hidden. You see I am a child of the seventies the decade of sexism, racism glamrockism in fact all the isms and to cap it off seriously flared jeans. I guess it was as always had been a decade of the British stiff upper lip, when men were still considered the main bread earner finished work and spent the evening drinking pints with whiskey chasers stood their ground supported the team their fathers and fathers father had supported took their wives out on a Saturday night to the local social club where they would laugh along to racist and homophobic comedians, sing and dance, then end the night with a good old fashion punchup.

Nobody spoke about Mental health and it was not the thing for men to do. Depression would have been considered a sign of weakness and unmanly. So for years I hid my depression and hiding and not talking only made things worse. As Bob Dylan said the times they are a changin.

My personal Depression.

I call it personal because I believe it is unique to me. Just as we all have our own DNA, Fingerprints ect each individual who suffers with depressive symptoms will have similarities but there will be distinct differences. Probably why people react differently to medication or therapy.

My depression is indiscriminate. It doesn't have a certain time or day to strike so I don't really know when it will overwhelm me. I use a rating system of how I feel mentally on a daily basis ratings 1 to 10. My first thought on waking is where I am on the scale.

Stages

10- Suicidal and will act upon it. Thankfully I have never gotten here. I have what I call my anchors to this world. First my children I know I would destroy their lives if I ever acted on the immense dark thoughts that can in a depressive episode play on my mind. My parents gave me a simple sad but true quote: I bury them they don't want to have to bury me. My Wife who doesn't have any depression but suffers along with me, she already pays a price.

7,8,9-If im here there are constant thoughts of suicide, thoughts that the people around me would be better off without me. In this stage normal life ceases. You don't get out of bed no bathing, no eating, no drinking you can't even brush your teeth. Life stops no interest in anything you're in an absolute pit of dark despair. My mind will keep harping back to mistakes I have made in my life and I will condemn myself as a total waste. Life has no meaning there is no point to existence. You cannot work or function in this phase. This stage can descend on me at any time. I can be looking forward to a night out, be it a meal with my Family or a pint with friends only to find myself disengaging and falling into a depressive mode and not wanting to be there. The times I have spent walking around Restaurant /pub car parks trying to talk myself into continuing with the evening and failing or overdrinking alcohol to try and keep the darkness at bay. Writing this scares me knowing I could be back here.

6- Is a phase where i spend a lot of time. This is the battling stage and probably the hardest to describe. Its like your in a tunnel but you are close to the light at the end and this is were the techniques I have learnt over the years come into play be it meditation ,CBT the important thing here is the support of family your colleagues and Management to allow a bit of flexibility vis a ve start times of shifts end times because I will be slower possibly a bit foggy and sluggish and i will be battling with myself ie get out of bed,bathe, one foot in front of the other, it's not easy in fact it's very difficult.

4,5 Normality This is the phase where hopefully all the constant and daily work on my mind gets me to and hopefully will on a more permanent basis. This phase is where I can get up in the morning and engage with life with a relative degree of normality. I Get to work, laugh and joke with colleagues and at home I'm interested in my family and not so wrapped up in myself. Depression is such a selfish illness.

The things that help

Meditation and mindfulness : I find a simple 20 minutes or so of this seems to help being in the now, no dwelling on the past and no dreading the future. To this end I have helped create a quiet room in work where I and my colleagues can go and chill,meditate, contemplate ect.



Art: I am an artist. Art is a form of meditation to me. I can get lost in art. I'm not in this world when painting, it's just me and a canvas or wall and colour and something happens sometimes good sometimes well? Over the past year I have with my office manager Tina's permission been bringing my art into the office canteen where I have set up a gallery again

this has helped with my mental well being.



Talking and openness-The most important of all is coming to terms with and talking about depression .This is something I have learned as I said at the beginning of this blog i am a child of the 70s where being open about depression meant you were less of a man but thousands of lost lives will testify that this is just plane nonsense.were 50 years on there is plenty of help out there and people will now listen and understand.

Anthony Dunbar
Postie
Speke Delivery office