

Self destruction, so why do we do it. If you are mentally ill – you know what self destructive behavior is and if you are a loved one of mentally ill person, chances are you sit back and simply ask – why?

It is very frustrating – I know firsthand. I understand as a consumer how difficult it is dealing with self-destruction and as a friend to many with mental illness, I understand the confusion and frustration involved with trying to understand why someone would be so damaging to one's self.

I can only give my perspective on this complex and dangerous issue. I know for example how fast (within hours) I can take myself from a place of confidence to a place of complete and utter emotional insignificance. I can so easily and unknowingly convince myself that everyone is against me.

How can this be possible? I have everything going for me, now. Well, I think it starts with the realization that everything in life can be taken away and quickly. I believe that most have times that give them a lack of confidence and security – but what happens when those times can be validated by situations of the past?

I have said many times throughout my writings... “There are no excuses for bad behavior.” However, bad behavior cannot be addressed and changed unless we identify the reason for the behavior. When you look at the pictures of the famous people that have been challenged with mental illness on the homepage – you see a whirlwind of bad behavior. I, on the other hand see

many people fighting desperately for sanity in all the wrong ways.

Let me start by addressing consumers. What is the outcome? What do you stand to gain by drinking, drugs, dare deviling, etc.? What are you running from? What can't you communicate with a rational mind that you can communicate with an altered state of mind? What are you screaming for? I can't expect you to answer these questions without me answering them. For me – I feel as though (sometimes) I have a two ton weight on my legs and I am scratching and clawing to not be taken under. This represents my past. Even as much as I communicate – it is nearly impossible for me to communicate all that that weight represents. I don't want pity for it – I just want it gone! Some days I am great at letting it go and other days it seems to expand. On these days – I reflect on a quote by Nick Traina, “no matter how much I put in the bank, I always end up broke!” Yes, this is a depressing quote and it doesn't have anything to do with money – but at times, with all the effort I put into my own recovery and to advocacy – I do feel like I end up broke or broken more likely.

That is okay, believe it or not. I am comfortable with what I know because I can then deal with what I know to the best of my ability. The first question I ask of myself is this, “are you safe?” if that answer is yes – then I am doing well! I have never given myself the illusion that once my life was stabilized that I would not longer deal with the symptoms and effects of mental illness – of course I will and so will you. What you need to know is – you can live a healthy and productive life. No one is going to hate you because you are not always perfect. In the pictures on

the homepage, you also see a lot of people that have overcome their bad behavior and so can you. Not one of those people had an easy journey – some succumb to the illness – don't you!

To the loved ones of consumers: First and foremost it is most important to make sure your loved one is safe. The second thing to remember is to not place guilt onto your loved one because they have fallen off the tightrope of living with mental illness. Guilt, will help nothing – I am pretty confident to say that your loved one most likely carries enough guilt around with him or her for the entire family. If the bad behavior continues and the consumer does not seem to be able to get out of the cycle, you need to get them help. Be it a hospital or a doctor's appointment. This is your responsibility – giving advice and therapy is not your responsibility, it won't be received well and it will just compound the problem.

I can only speak for myself, but there are times when I really resent “normal” people. I don't dislike them, I just resent being told how life is or should be by people that do not live inside my head with all the other people that are in there! ☺

Ultimately, the decision to live your life in the least self-destructive manner is yours, the consumer. No one can make that life change for you. Don't you think mental illness is enough, without burdening yourself with additional issues such as drugs and alcohol? I understand full well trying to shut off the mind – but there are other ways. You must find those ways and see what works for you. Consider it an adventure in self-discovery! Some make God more a part of their daily lives and that always keeps things in check others find exercise or

athletics (this isn't my favorite☺) writing, journaling, reading, meditating are just a few of the more powerful positive coping mechanisms and tools.

One thing you must never do is fake it. Don't fake that you are happy, when you are not. Don't fake that you are at peace when you are in turmoil. I use to do this all the time in my past and it only produces a living lie which is damaging to not only yourself, but everyone around you. Be honest with yourself and your emotional/mental state. If someone doesn't understand or judges you for feeling the way you do... well, they probably are not a good influence. I know in my life that I am more than capable of being my own bad influence; I don't need anyone to help me!

Last but not least. You are worth your life. You have a contribution to make in life whether you realize that or not. Just as you can never be anything more than anyone else you can never be less. Learn to celebrate your life and you will find that life starts to celebrate you.