

Mental health awareness:

Depression

I'm a person, not a statistic

Hi, I'm Aimee. I live with major depressive disorder and I've probably have had it most of my life.

When I think back to it, I know that I first started struggling probably somewhere around the age of 9 or 10. I wasn't officially diagnosed until I was probably close to 20. And you know, it's been a long road. I won't lie that there weren't a lot of challenges along the way.

As a teenager I struggled a lot and I was the kind of person that didn't want other people to know so I hid it well. And I put on a nice face but inside I was really hurting. And I continued to struggle alone and in silence until I was in my early adulthood, probably 19, 20 years old.

When I finally sought help and came to the understanding that it was okay to not be okay — lots of people struggle with depression and that's when I was formally diagnosed and I spent a lot of time reflecting back, thinking how much I protected others. Worrying about what other people would think or that people wouldn't like me anymore. That I would disappoint people because I struggle with mental illness.

And now I know that mental illness is really no different than having a physical illness. And my loved ones and friends would want me to get that physical illness treated and it's no different from having mental illness. They would want the best for me and they, I would hope, wouldn't think any differently of me because I had a mental illness. I'm happy to say that — well, do I still struggle with depression? I do but I have also learned to manage it really well and recognize when things are starting to take that downward slide.

And now I do ask for help. I share very openly with my friends. And people know what to do for me when I need help because I tell them. I don't hide it anymore and I feel a lot freer; true to myself. And with that I can live really my best life.

If I had to give any advice to someone out there, I would say, "Don't wait. Don't be that statistic. You're a person who deserves to get better and to feel better. You wouldn't delay if you felt physical symptoms. So don't delay now."

I think the misconception is that if you struggle from mental illness that that means that life as you know it is over. And it doesn't have to be that way. There is help out there. There's good help out there. And it's finding the right thing that works for you. And once you do, don't look back.

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