

Finding Normal

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Historical Development

First
signs of
anxiety –
age 3
years

School age & Teenage Years

- **Panic attacks**
- Hyperventilation
 - **Seizures**
 - **Sleeping**
- *Head banging*
 - **Cutting**
- ***Binge Drinking***
- **Suicidal ideation**
- Suicide attempts
- **Age 19 – Psychosis**
- **The System...**

My Twenties...

- Multiple hospitalizations, ever changing symptoms/diagnosis
- Changing meds/treatment plans – sometimes on meds, often not
- Working/volunteering to attempt to keep skills up while in/out of workforce
- Psychiatric palliative case – not matter of if, but when

The Survival of Self

- Long periods of times with stability
- Decided to start a family
- Experienced mild Post Partum Depression with first baby
- Decided to take my Bachelor of Social Work Degree starting in 2005

Complications arise...

- Pregnant again
- Difficult pregnancy, learned of triploidy
- April 18, 2008, our first daughter was born still after complicated decisions
- Shutdown



Unable to Cope

- Pregnant again – second daughter born April 10, 2008
- 1st year anniversary of stillbirth April 18, 2008
- Perfect storm – unresolved grief, mental illness, pp depression evolved into psychosis
- Brain was broken – 10 month hospitalization, ECT treatments, ongoing psychosis, intense assessments with new team members – learned I used extreme dissociation as main coping mechanism

Ongoing Dichotomy – what is so very pathological and what is self?

- Visiting with baby, toddler in hospital
- Attending university classes
- Sharing of trauma

Healing Begins...

- Writing codes
- Unresponsive under blanket
- Man in a black coat following me
- Flooded with memories of trauma

Things start to come together

- Excruciating mind work, goal setting resumes
- Self forgiveness
- Dropping expectations – second lease on life
- Finish degree in 2011, plan to start Master's in next year or two
- Breathe in moments – very deeply!
- Practice gratitude, lean into the vulnerability

What is life at this moment?

*Sports mom

*Wife

*Parent Council

*Community Board Member

*Employee

*Self care appointments



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- Social Worker, Mental Health Advocate, Public Speaking evolves
 - Canadian Alliance of Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH)
 - One of the Five Faces of Mental Illness for the 2013 MIAW Campaign

My “Finding Normal” Mindset...

- Normal doesn't exist the way I thought it did – I define my existence
- Take whatever comes today, this minute
- Accepting weird and random mojo – sometimes, laughter's all I've got!
- Adjusting expectations for others, and more importantly, for myself.
- Allowing emotions/thoughts to flow, with overall time check of three days
- Basics are critical – sleep cycle, eating clean, playing hard with loved ones