I Suffered a Mental Health Meltdown

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April 15, 2020 By Larry Watson

Hey family and fellow quarantined people. How are you all? It's been a heck of a last few months. Here's a subject that isn't discussed much especially in communities with people of color let alone the HIV/AIDS community: MENTAL HEALTH!!!!!!!!!!!!!

In January, The Well Project, an online resource for people living with HIV, stated that depression and other serious mental health issues are prevalent among long-term survivors with the virus.

This month, after being off psychotropic medications for almost six years, I had a major meltdown. I lost my job; my character was assassinated and the hurt I caused the love of my life a year ago has haunted me every day since. The resultant depression and PTSD have all contributed to my downfall, especially since I know I am responsible for the decisions I made.

For the past two months, I was living on the streets and not taking my antiviral medications or seeing a doctor and not eating. I lost 30 pounds from not eating; slept on the sidewalk and the voices were back in my head confusing me as I was out there. As we all know, none of that is good for anyone's health!

Now, just imagine the effect of these actions on the immune system and the rest of the body.

At this point, it's been 30 years since this virus has rented space in my body. I am sure that the things I never addressed in all my time helping others and being in recovery are the things that, deep down, are still hurting me, as well as these new problems that have appeared.

I wish I could turn back the hands of time. But since I can't I have to live with the decisions and consequences of those choices I made for the rest of my life. Each day, depression manifests itself in various ways.

I find myself constantly worrying about things, which, I know is a symptom of anxiety. Sure, worrying sometimes is a normal part of everyday life. But I worry excessively, even about things that might not seem very important. These worries often intrusive and affect my thoughts and emotions even when I try my best to ignore them.

While doing research online, I found a website called BetterHelp where I read about a series of

symptoms of depression and anxiety. The self-help site is described as “the world’s largest e-counseling platform” where people who are struggling with various challenges in life can find professional help.

One of the things my depression led me to do is harm myself as a result of something I did to my ex-wife. Even though I didn’t succeed in what I attempted, as a result, I can no longer function sexually. Karma is real; believe me when I tell you.

Fortunately, now I’m no longer on the streets and I’m back to taking my medications and seeing my doctor. As a matter of fact, my viral load is still undetectable and my CD4 count is at 652 after dropping from 835. I’m seeing a psychiatrist and taking medications to help with the severe depression.

On a blog hosted by The Well Project called “A Girl Like Me,” I found another long-term survivor living with HIV with whom I could relate. In a post titled “Drawing Lines In The Sand,” she wrote, “We were a group of people who were willing to stand up for ourselves and for others and face what the world had to offer…Those living with HIV today can never [imagine] the horrors many of us had to endure in the early days of this epidemic. I wish I didn’t remember—I wish I could forget.”

Gotta go everyone. Take care; talk with you all again soon!

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