

## Speaking from Experience Living with Bipolar Disorder USA

### Transcript for Chapter 4 of 9: Turning point

**Jan –**

The turning point for me really was getting clean and sober because now my medications... with my medications, I'm even and have a life now. Before I was run by depression and depression was run by using and drinking, ya know? It's gonna throw it off and so that's the turning point.

**Todd –**

I spent two months doing whatever I could...I didn't rob anybody or steal anything but like, I panhandled a lot and did odd jobs off of craigslist to get money to buy crack and alcohol and cigarettes. Last July 5 at 1:30 in the morning I was in the homeless shelter and I was sitting on my bunk and I was looking at a guy who was no more than 5 feet away from me and he looked kind of like me, he was a couple of years older and he was shooting heroin in the shelter and I had a flashback of the night I was with my mom when she passed away and I realized in that moment that if I didn't do something right then, that I was just going to give in to whatever was going on in my head and that would have been it. So, I wrote an 8-page letter and I walked into a crisis center here in the city and I walked it up to the counter, I couldn't talk. I hadn't done...I hadn't smoked anything or drank anything in almost a day so I was going through, like hard-core withdrawal already and she told me to have a seat. The doctor came out, said we have this program here in the city and we think it's perfect for you and 2 days later they sent me over there. And after 2 weeks of an assessment process they sent me to a 90-day program which is dual-diagnosis for mental illness and addiction and the people there literally saved my life.

**Nadine –**

There was a very particular turning point in my journey...there was many, but the one that I think is really key is when I became a grandmother. It wasn't too...my granddaughter's 9 so it was right about the same time that I got diagnosed, specifically, with bipolar and I realized that this world is a place that my granddaughter's gonna grow up in and if I don't learn how to maneuver the world, then how can I help her learn.

**Tom –**

For me, I had motivation because I have 2 children and that's the most important source of motivation, knowing that they still need my love and financial support, that I have to keep myself healthy and do whatever I can to help them.

**Avonelle –**

I decided that I was going to work because I really needed to get better. Started to go to my doctor, started to take my medication and, ya know, thought, "This is not my life. My life is not going to support groups and seeing my doctor. My life is outside of that." So I thought, "What can I do?" And I was looking for some volunteer opportunity and I saw this volunteer opportunity about...I don't really remember what it was about actually, something about mental health. So I showed up to this orientation and started saying what you'll do and I thought, "I don't even know what they're talking about, but I'll do it. I just want to do something." And I thought, "Whatever, I sound nice." That was my illness talking, my ego... of course, sitting, having people listen to me for like an hour, I've got seat number one. So I signed up to talk about mental illness. And then I thought, "What? You work in the field, you'll probably have people sitting in the audience listening to you saying you're bipolar and they were your co-workers. Can you do that?" And I thought, "Don't think about it, just do it, because you need to do it." And so I started doing it. That was a turning point.

**Tom –**

There's a saying that people like to use that hope is the catalyst for recovery. I totally agree with that, especially for people that suffer from depression. One of the things that happens when you're depressed is that you lose sight of hope. And for me, it was almost like a spatial thing, I almost felt like my surroundings were negative and that there was no hope and that I would never get better. Well, one of the things is that you will get better even if you don't get any treatment. Depressions have a tendency to lift on their own accord after a certain number of months. Now, I recommend getting treatment because you don't want to prolong how long you're suffering. For me, my first depression lasted 9 months and no one should suffer that long so I think it's important to get treatment as quickly as

possible. Actually a measure of recovery from depression is having a feeling of hope, and having a positive feeling about the future is going to be good. I think that that's a sign of good mental health.