

Speaking from Experience Living with Bipolar Disorder USA

Transcript for Chapter 7 of 9: Support

Nadine –

As I got older and the diagnosis came, my family is actually...has a way of understanding me and so they've become more supportive of my challenges.

Jan –

My husband is an amazing man. He's been so supportive. Ya know, we've had our times, believe me. We were apart for 2 years and that was mainly...well, that's a long story. But anyway, he's very supportive. He understands the disease, he's done his research and often, at this point, he's able to remove himself enough that he can say to me sometimes, "Ya know, it looks like you're kind of, a little bit, in a manic phase, ya know, like you're talking a lot and really fast." And then he knows me by now that often that is followed by depression so...and he knows now and has been through therapy...that when I'm in that place, there's really nothing he can do to help me get out, but just give me a hug.

Tom –

I had periods of my life where I was so depressed I either attempted suicide or thought about suicide. Of course it's not something I'm particularly proud of either but when I look back on my life, one of the things that is important to me that despite that behavior I still have the support of my loved ones. And that to me just says that their support is so strong and that they still love me that despite these types of behaviors...I mean, that kind of support is what makes it so that I can continue to prosper.

Alexandra & Thomas –

My aunt was a tremendous help with Tommy because...and I think that spared him a lot of me because she took him to Paris, she took him to Oregon, the mountains... a lot of things. So he experienced many sides of the coin, if you will.

Jan –

My mom definitely, she just was there for me. And a lot of friends. I have a lot of friends that are so understanding and that's only because I've surrounded myself with them at this point. For me to be around people that don't understand, it doesn't serve me. And it doesn't serve them. So for me at this point I just have a lot of friends around me that get it.

Nadine –

I have a few close friends. Like one friend in particular I've known for 20 years...25 years...and she knew me before the diagnosis and was very forgiving and supportive. But once the diagnosis came down...she's a nurse too, so she had the better understanding of what I was struggling with and so she's been there a lot. Ya know, she calls and times that I've had to go in the hospital, she's been able to show up and help me get healthy again.

Jan –

First I'll ask for help from somebody or I'll go to an AA meeting, or I'll call my sponsor. But yea, I have to ask for help or I'm in trouble.

Todd –

The role that friends have played in my recovery as far as support goes hasn't been as much as some of the health professionals, but there's kind of a crossover. There are lines that can't be crossed...there are boundaries, professional boundaries when you work in healthcare so there aren't... I can't go out to dinner with certain health professionals, like counselors from the houses that I graduated from. But the friendship that I grew with those people over the last year and a half, that's been the majority of my support from a friendship standpoint. The support that I got from them was unconditional. It was honest, it was real, it was challenging, it never let up, they don't take a break. My cousin, Allison, is my biggest supporter. She actually works in healthcare back in the Midwest. She's an amazing nurse and I hadn't talked to her in over a decade and the last time I had seen her she was in high school and we reconnected on...through a social media site and we talk, or we text and talk via the internet all the time. She's been my biggest supporter, she relays what's going on with me to my family and my family is now part of my support system. It's

incredible how that all can spider-web out.

Avonelle –

I found a really good doctor who I actually had for over 10 years, psychiatrist. And she was really gentle in the way she would talk to me because...I'm a great patient but I'm also a very challenging patient. So I think she recognized that when I'm manic, my idea of my intelligence supersedes the entire world. So she was very gentle in talking to me in a way that wouldn't make me leave the room thinking that she was an idiot and that was very helpful for me to understand that. It's not necessarily that there's something wrong with me, but there's some imbalance and she validated...I wanted a brain scan and all that stuff and she sent me to have it. I thought, "Well let's eliminate a tumor, all the things that can make me have some of these symptoms." And she did it and I really respected that.

Alexandra & Thomas –

My case manager, for example, sends me cards all the time, just like little funny cards, things that just really...I mean, it's so important to feel like, no matter what...if I climb or I fall, or I what...I'm gonna be...my friend or whomever is gonna be there.

Jan –

So, imagine there's this chasm and you can come into it a few different ways – mental illness and drugs and alcohol. Some people have genetic disposition, right? So genetic disposition, whatever happens, they fall into the chasm and that's mental illness, drugs and alcohol, fall into the chasm. Some people, something happens in their life, it could be a death or something that either gets them into a depression where their brain is not working or it gets them into a place where they're drinking and drugging, eventually they're gonna fall in the chasm. The difference between the two is that someone who has a genetic disposition is either gonna have to take medications for the rest of their life in terms of mental illness or never drink again and use whatever programs works for that person. The other side of that, if it's just situational, often those people can either pull out of it with some kind of anti-depressant or something or stop drinking a little bit, but their life...they may or may not have to take medications the rest of their life or they may be able to drink again, so that's really helped me too. And so the bottom line on that and the last part of that is, there's no way to get out of that chasm on our own. We have to get help from other people.