

Questions for Interviews

What symptoms of depression were you experiencing that prompted you to get help?

I was having trouble sleeping, concentrating, and shutting off my mind. My mind would obsess on a few things over and over again. My appetite had changed drastically—I wasn't eating and never even thought about food. I began to feel hopeless and helpless. The final straw was the unending thoughts of ending it all.

How long did it take you to accept you had an illness that you would deal with for the rest of your life?

When I was first diagnosed, I spent so much time worrying about the depression returning. And the beast did return with vengeance—three additional times. It took four bouts and some ten years for me to finally accept that I had an illness that I would need to contend with for the rest of my life.

What is the hardest part of depression?

The hardest part of living with depression is two-fold. First, the stigma surrounding mental health diagnosis still remains. Interestingly enough, even healthcare professionals still perceive depression differently than a physical illness. When I visit a new doctor and am asked what the medications I am taking are for, their entire body language changes. Secondly, the hardest part of depression is its ability to rob you of embracing life. My five senses are impacted in a way that makes life unbearable at times.

What's the biggest learning that you have had from living with depression?

Today, I consider depression as a blessing in my life. A blessing—yes, a blessing. I have learned to live my life in the present. I can't change what has happened to me to (and the four bouts) and I have chosen not to spend time worrying about the return of my depression (if and when it returns, I seek support and help); I live in the present moment—treating each day as a gift.

What's needed to stay in recovery from depression?

Any time a physical illness is encountered life style changes are necessary. It is no different when a mental illness is encountered—life style changes need to be made. For me I am protective of my sleep, exercise on a regular basis, watch my calorie intake (meds have a way of adding pounds). I have learned to keep a “lid” on the amount of stress and have even added acupuncture and massage therapy as part of wellness mix. Furthermore, medication and talk therapy round out my treatment plan. A personal commitment to recovery versus compliance to someone else's plan makes all the difference in the world.

What makes so many people so frightened by ECT?

Most people's viewpoint of ECT is a model they contracted from the media and movies. Today ECT is a viable adjunct to medication. ECT is a procedure that induces a grand-mal seizure in the brain. The jolt to the brain starts the neurotransmitters transmitting again. For me ECT is my "silver bullet."

What made you so hesitant in letting others know about your ECT treatments?

I was concerned that I would lose my employment if they found out about my treatments. I was also concerned about parents allowing their children to come to our home knowing to play with our children knowing I had ECT treatments—it was a trust factor.

Where can someone find support?

Surrounding yourself with others who deal with similar concerns helps the recovery process. Two organizations I recommend are

NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness)

DBPA (Depression/Bi Polar Alliance)