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## I've Learned Firsthand the Difficulties of Coping with Mental-Health Issues

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# I've Learned Firsthand the Difficulties of Coping with Mental-Health Issues

By Katherine Torres  
UCF Forum columnist  
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(Photo by Hamedmehat at Pixabay)

I feel that I can conquer anything now that I can successfully overcome my own mental-health issues.

The topic of mental health and mental-health issues was never something my family or friends talked about when I was growing up.

When I was in middle and high school, the term mental health was only brought up when we were learning about someone involuntarily committed through the Baker Act or someone who was acting “crazy” ... and other people would just jump to the conclusion that the person had a mental illness. It was as if the terms mental health and mental illness had a negative connotation. It wasn't until I entered college that I realized there is more to mental health.

In today's society, this topic seems to be brought up more and more through the news, social media, on the radio, and even in the workplace. Many celebrities have been coming out and speaking about their mental-health issues in hopes that it raises awareness to the fact that they are indeed human and that this is something most people go through. Even though we (sometimes) seem to be evolving as a society, it feels like there is still a stigma around mental-health issues.

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In the past two years, my body has been acting crazy in many ways completely out of the blue. I didn't understand what was going on at first and had a slight feeling that it had to do with anxiety. I never experienced anxiety to the point where I felt like I was going to pass out, so I wanted to make sure it wasn't anything related to my physical health. I decided to reach out to my doctor for some guidance.

After lots of blood work, tests to check my glucose, and being on a heart monitor for a month, I learned I am physically healthier than ever!

But why was I having these completely random episodes where I felt like I was suddenly going to pass out? I became depressed and felt like I was falling in a hole because I wasn't getting any answers. My doctor realized I wasn't happy when he gave me my tests results, even though everything would come out normal, because he knew I wanted to figure out what was going on with my body.

That was when he suggested I speak with a psychologist.

I was nervous with the thought of seeing a psychologist. Again, when I growing up, I was told that there was a negative connotation with seeing a psychologist and going to therapy sessions.

When I went into the session, my hands were sweaty, my heart was racing, and I didn't know what to expect. At the end of the session, I learned that everything I was experiencing was called panic disorder, a condition in which out of the blue my body goes into full panic mode and I feel like I am going to suddenly pass out. This episode typically lasts 15 to 20 minutes and then it goes away.

For once, I felt a sigh of relief because I finally received the answers I had been waiting for for months. However, learning that I was diagnosed with a mental-health issue such as panic disorder, made me finally understand, after all these years, why it's a difficult topic to talk about. I felt embarrassed and frustrated that I was going through this and it was very difficult to talk to those close to me about it. I felt like they didn't believe me or were coming up with excuses as to why I was feeling the way I was.

In this whole process I learned that I am just like other humans, and everyone experiences mental health issues, if even in different ways.

I learned that I should not be embarrassed to talk about my condition, because when I talk about it, I always learn that someone else is experiencing, or has experienced, mental-health issues in a similar way.

It is important for people to not be ashamed or embarrassed to seek help from a psychologist or a mental-health counselor.

I have learned different ways to cope with my anxiety and panic attacks in ways I never knew before. I feel stronger and comfortable to talk about my issues with my colleagues and those close to me.

And as I said, now I feel that I can conquer anything.

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