



In 1982, I was diagnosed with severe chronic depression, attention deficit disorder (ADD), and bipolar disorder. The only treatment that I was offered was medication to manage my symptoms. Medication worked for while, but every three to five years I had to change my medications, as they became ineffective over time. Even on medication, I suffered.

I was stigmatized by my own attitudes toward my mental health. I lost relationships due to self-isolation from friends, co-workers, loved ones, and others. Being a minister did not help. I kept my mental health status a secret from my employers, which prevented them from being able to show support. I experienced moments of high energy and productivity followed by moments of deep depression, unpredictable mood swings, and non-productivity. It was a struggle to get out of bed, go to work, cook, feed myself, clean my room, pay my bills, etc. My faith sustained me in the midst of my suffering, and gave me the will to live. But there were moments when I was willing to give up on the hope of ever having a meaningful and successful life, absent of suffering with my mental health.

In 2006, I was introduced to Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) created by Mary Ellen Copeland, while facilitating a depression group for members of my congregation in Philadelphia. WRAP introduced me to the possibility of recovering from my health condition, no longer suffering with it or in it. WRAP gave me control over my life. This is when my recovery began. Inspired, I became a WRAP facilitator. As a result, my faith has been restored. My personal relationship with God sustains me and is the source of my hope. Today, I am living a joyful, meaningful, and successful life.

***-Chester, East Palo Alto***

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