



Choices

One of the hardest experiences in my life was to choose life or death. Everything in my moral being is to choose life. But...What do you do when you feel alone? What do you do when you have no one supporting you? I've always believed if there is a will there is a way. So, if it's what you really want, you do whatever it takes to make it work. This time, it felt like the world was against me, like no one understood how I was feeling or agreed with what I wanted. I felt so alone during a time that I felt I should be happy...excited even. The pain of NOT choosing the helpless life that was growing in me was horrifying. I wanted to die, and for the first time in my life, I plotted how would be the easiest and most painless way to go. It wasn't just a fleeting thought. But the pain of not choosing my life and leaving my daughter to fend for life alone was even more terrifying. I chose MY life.

- Desirae

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The Risks

10 years ago, I had no fears surrounding substance abuse. I thought I was using because it was fun. I thought I was using because it made me a better hustler and for a moment it took away the pain. It took away the pain of all the trauma and violating experiences in my life. I had no care when it came to the consequences of my substance abuse. I turned a blind eye to the hurt and pain I caused myself and others. Today the risks that come with substance abuse is the loss of my freedom, to wear my own clothes, eat healthy food and be with my family. The risks of substance abuse is a loss of peace, health, and growth. Now I am a mother to an amazing baby girl, so taking that risk now means I lose much more. I lose the opportunity to teach her, love her, and support her. I'd lose the joy and unconditional love she brings to my life. The risk of going back to substance abuse is one I'm not willing to take.

- Desirae

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Journey Back Home

Being diagnosed with schizophrenia was a big deal for me. I didn't take it like a big deal at first. Just being young saying, or at least just thinking, what I could get out of the system. Didn't work out that way, long story short, I actually got into the system myself. Thinking I was misdiagnosed instead having a drinking problem developing PTSD. Finding myself to have an overlapping problem that began when I took my first sip of an alcoholic beverage before the diagnosis. Now I find myself in a halfway house coming from mental institutions, screaming, "why am I here?", saying what everybody else is saying with a known mental illness. Talking to my girlfriend to get me through, takes her to tell me alcohol is too much. So now I'm realizing it isn't alcohol but me, myself have a problem with alcohol. Realizing I can't do it on my own I am ready to come home. Learning to be a man and ask questions. I am learning that I will have to deal with my diagnosis of schizophrenia and grow from there.

- Dupree

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Love Yourself

I was taught that as a black woman, we come from kings and queens and that I can do anything as long as I keep my eyes on the prize.

Unfortunately, starting in high school, I didn't feel that way about myself. I've dealt with depression, low self-esteem and negative self-talk. I attempted to take my life when I was 16 due to the unbearable pain I was feeling. My parents reluctantly offered mental health support, but I knew that 'we' don't do therapy.

Throughout the years, I continue to suffer from depression and have negative thoughts. The constant beatings I gave myself left me with scars and toying around with the thought of taking my life.

I currently work for a mental health organization where I support young adults, some experiencing the same journey that I traveled and reminding them that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

Today, I have a 1 year old daughter who reminds me every day that I have someone to live for. I spend time with myself through meditation to remind myself why I'm here and that I love myself today and I write a gratitude list every day to keep my mind and self-talk positive. Life is a blessing. Please be kind to yourself!

- JWT, Menlo Park

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Those who have mastered the art of falling have no fear of rising! -Mehmet Murat Ildan

When I was in high school, my friends were interested in drugs and alcohol. But, I struggled with suicidal thoughts. I was really sad that I had to deal with it.

In 8th grade, my mom finally took me to the doctor. We got some bad news: I was diagnosed with ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, and PTSD. It was the saddest day of my life.

They put me in a group home, I got a therapist, I got to do what I actually wanted to do. Playing soccer and basketball made me feel great. It took tears, nights without sleeping, my resistance, a lot of effort from my mom, god's willingness to forgive me and make me live my life.

I learned you can't give up.

When I think about my past, it has been hard, but I got back up again and the future is now. I'm succeeding. I'm not thinking about suicidal thoughts anymore. It comes every now and then, but not as much as before.

Every time you think about suicidal thoughts, just try to think about my story.

- Moses

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