



God is in control no matter the weather. Whether the weather changes, “I am” here.

It all starts with the stretch before I go outside. This is my favorite place to walk - by the bleachers of Westmoor High School baseball courts. Every walk is different. I have several minutes of peace every time I'm on this walk and see everything. I observe everything. The area shows the sun just beyond the fog. I go here on several different occasions. Weather I was feeling great about myself with company or being alone, I could always come here for a few moments of refuge and a safe space to observe everything: the basketball courts, the swimming pool, the people, the woman on the bike with her boombox blasted, the elderly people on their walk, the kids who play basketball with their parents, or the coaches trying to teach the kids good morals while the kids practice baseball. I saw the same person on my walks 3 times, but the 4th time, I didn't.

I see different things each time. In the first photo, I noticed the sun shining on the grass, in the second photo the fog outstretched several feet in front of me, and in the last photo the clouds captured the last minutes of sunlight until the sun went down. A new photo per walk. My mood and the day is different each time I am here and I am glad the photos reflect that.

Walking truly boosted my mood when I'd feel gloom from being at home with my thoughts of Schizophrenia. This is a way I take care of myself: approximately 2 miles a day, at least 4,800 steps, where I can venture various paths in Daly City. It all leads here whether or not I get that Boba drink or cut corners on the street. I blast my worship music while trying to get into the presence of God. I appreciate God’s creation. I try to find peace while appreciating everything.

God fights my battles with me. It’s a spiritual warfare battle in my mind every day. I meditate on scripture in my mind as I walk to fight back against the voices. It reminds me how much I am loved by God and how much authority I have as a Child of God. The walk helps ground my thoughts and empowers me. By the time I get home, my mind is more calm and I fear the thoughts less. I feel healthier overall knowing I put in all this work into strengthening myself and it’s a bonus that I got to enjoy my day. Glory be to God because he gives me peace on my best and worst days. I get to walk with God and He is my strength and my shield. He reminds me that God is in control in my life whether the weather is good or not. -



My curse found a color in the Mental Health Rainbow

What is a cursed life? A cursed life is a concept referring to a pattern of persistent hardship, misfortune, or failure that seems to be intentionally inflicted on an individual or family, preventing them from achieving success or happiness in areas like relationships, finances, or health. This is often described as a negative atmosphere or a "dark shadow" following a person. While the term is popular in some religious and spiritual communities, it can also be understood philosophically as a feeling that life itself is inherently unfair or a source of suffering (Oxford Languages, n.d.).

It took me many years to understand that my MH diagnosis does not have to be perceived as a heavy chain that will lock me out of all the things that “normal people” have access to. For years I was walking my path alone, in black and white, with a terrible shadow following me, constantly breaking chains, going uphill, fighting frustrations, fears, solitude, misunderstandings, anger, being secretive and frequently apologizing for being myself. Talking in public about depression, anxiety and borderline personality connected me with a community of other similar, but different people. Similar because they were having the same feelings, they were walking a shared path, they were also “cursed”. Different because they were free, they were publicly announcing their diagnosis, they were living in colors, in community, happy. They were living in recovery.

Today I also live in recovery, and I understand that for me freedom means **Radical Acceptance + sharing my MH with other people who still suffer. I no longer live in black and white, walking alone, I now share the path with other people living in colors.**

If you are reading this, if you have your own “curse”, if you live in the shadows, if you are suffering...you don’t need to walk alone. Join the MH rainbow and find freedom, happiness, recovery, success, company. Speak up. We are here to help.

By: PN



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH
**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
& RECOVERY SERVICES**



This Photovoice project was supported by San Mateo County’s Behavioral Health and Recovery Services’ Office of Diversity and Equity. Funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63).



Does your day ever leave you feeling mis-mangled?

This mannequin and set of legs are mine in my living room. The torso is going to be made into a lamp with a lamp shade for a head and my feet are lounging on my chaise couch chair. It is a comforting routine to sit down along the side of my living room windows to catch up with the setting sun in order to unwind some of my thoughts for the day. I keep several daily readers books on the window's ledge from the morning's inspiration. However, since I live a block from the beach, my getting in sync with nature's closing rhythm with my own wellness harmony allows me to find gratitude and get centered.

On a journaling labyrinth retreat, someone whispered to me that one of my earthly superpowers was vulnerability. What once felt like a weakness, I can now reconsider a strength. How many of those can you transpose?

By: ICUivyclarkunlimited



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH
**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
& RECOVERY SERVICES**



This Photovoice project was supported by San Mateo County's Behavioral Health and Recovery Services' Office of Diversity and Equity. Funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63).



Healing in a Foreign Land

I didn't know there was such a thing as immigrant grief, but it's exactly what I experienced for years. I not only missed my family and friends; I grieved the loss of familiarity, social status, and comprehension. I struggled to fit in. Everything around me was different, strange, unfamiliar—the sounds, smells, tastes, weather, plants, and animals. And of course, there was the language, which brought with it the constant humiliations of not being able to understand others or express myself. Most people were friendly and nice, but I often felt out of place because I couldn't understand them. I was angry with myself for feeling such depression and distress, as otherwise, my life was comfortable and safe. I was ashamed to complain, as my struggles seemed so small compared to what others went through.

Then, one day, our teachers at adult school organized a field trip to the library and helped me get a library card. I had always loved to read, and even though at first I couldn't read anything more than the simplest children's books, just going to the library made me calm and happy. My journey toward acceptance and integration has been long. I still sometimes feel extremely sad and lonely, but visits to the library always lift my mood and give me hope. Just walking along the bookshelves and watching other patrons helps. I have never felt out of place in the library—it is my emotional refuge.

By: M.C., age 51



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
& RECOVERY SERVICES**



This Photovoice project was supported by San Mateo County's Behavioral Health and Recovery Services' Office of Diversity and Equity. Funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63).