

# My Mental Illness and Addiction: Part Two

By Jim Rachels

I woke up this morning feeling much better and lighter than the day before. When I say I feel lighter when I woke up I mean that when you are depressed you have an invisible weight on your shoulders and today I didn't have that. It's a good feeling. I didn't wake up only to start tossing and turning trying to avoid getting up and facing the day. Today I simply hit the snooze once and when the time came to get up I didn't have to fight so much.

I got up and then I went to the bathroom. I did my business in there and then made my way to my espresso machine to make myself some espresso shots to bring to work. I drink way too much caffeine and definitely need to slow down. But let's call it what it is, it's a drug and I'm addicted to it. It makes me feel good, keeps me alert and if I drink too much sometimes I could feel a slight euphoria. Then I fed my cats and changed their water bowl and got them fresh water. After that, I proceeded to go into my bedroom and get some clothes together that I would be wearing for the day. I then made my way into the shower. I made sure that I shaved my face. I brushed my teeth today and I'm proud of that. Days when I'm depressed I don't brush my teeth or if I do it takes a tremendous amount of effort. Anyone with depression will know what I'm talking about. The simplest tasks can seem near impossible when you're feeling depressed.

During this entire time, I'm getting thoughts in my head about my old cats that I lost and how sad it was. Yesterday I got terribly upset when I thought of them and today it was different. It was more nostalgic thinking rather than depressed thinking. I remembered how much we loved each other and I moved on with my morning. This is huge for me. Having my thoughts either go in one direction and then the other. It's good to have them going in the right direction.

I think the main reason I feel better is last night I was able to join one of our "Chill and Chat" zoom meetings. We've got a great group of regulars that I've come to adore quite a bit. We've got people from all different types of backgrounds. Some are religious and some are not. We don't agree on everything but we have healthy debates. I consider this group now a part of my family. And last night I was able to be with my family for over three hours. We talked about all different types of things and everyone was sharing quite a bit. All in all it was a great session and it really made me feel so much better. It felt like getting a virtual hug from the group.

I believe that meeting last night is the reason I woke up in a good mood this morning. This shows the importance of building a good community of like-minded individuals around you. I can't emphasize enough how important this is for recovery. It's something that the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous found out a long time ago. That two addicts talking to each other has a power that is hard to explain. You have something huge

in common and are fighting the same battles. Addiction comes in many shapes and sizes but at the end of the day we're all facing the same thing. Having this group has changed my recovery and the way I live my life. This group is a part of me. It has become a vital lifeline in my recovery and I'm thankful every day for what has happened in our group and the way we've grown. Today I walk around feeling proud thinking of these things and yesterday I was thinking that all this was for nothing. It's amazing the way depression can affect your brain and truly make you a different person sometimes.

We ended up staying on our call until around 11:15 at night. The meeting started at 6:30 so this went on for a long time. We got to know one of our newer members who has been recently joining our calls more often. I love welcoming new members into our group. There's no better feeling than to know you might be helping someone get through what all of us addicts have been through.

I finally got to bed and was able to sleep through the entire night. When I was in active addiction it was very rare for me to get a full night's sleep. Even if I went to bed at a reasonable hour I would still wake up in the middle of the night. Sometimes sweating profusely and others times I would be getting cramps in my legs and having to get up and walk them off. That was all due to dehydration. I would be drinking so much liquor without any water and I would be really terribly dehydrated. This is the way I lived for over ten years. This became my norm. It got to a point where I accepted this as the way things were going to be. I had totally forgotten what it felt like to get a good night's rest. So when I finally got sober slept through the night without anything drugs or alcohol in my system I was shocked about how I just slept through the night without waking up. It was incredible. Now every night I make sure I take my medicine and get some good sleep in. I don't think a lot of us addicts realize just how important a good night's sleep is.

Moving forward to today I just want to say all that had happened last night set me up for a good day today. I woke up refreshed and with a clear peaceful mind. It was a good morning. Today went by quickly and now I'm getting close to the end of the day at my work. Today I was just taking care of all the social media for Addicts Anonymous and writing a bit. So today was a great day. I'm alive and breathing, have a job, have my family and have this group that I am so grateful for.

I wish what I have upon no one, it is a terrible thing to deal with. But I must say dealing with this gives people and strength and courage to move forward no matter what's in their way. As we battle with our disease day in and day out plus the fact that we have a substance use disorder gives us many challenges to overcome in our life.

Dual diagnosis has become quite prevalent in our community. Dealing with a mental illness plus addiction makes our lives that much more difficult to manage. But it is possible and you should never lose hope. There are many people like us going through the same thing and fighting the same battles. Realizing you are not alone is something huge for us. It makes the world a little more digestible. It can provide us with a source of hope.

And this article is just two days in my life and me dealing with multiple disorders. I hope my sharing these things about my life will someday help others. This is the entire point of me writing these articles about the daily struggles of a recovering addict with mental illness issues.

I hope you enjoyed the article and be on the lookout for more!