

the ONE about my Mental health

by Guru Mani H

I **worry**, and it's *so bad* I can't ever seem to relax. I always have this sick feeling in the pit of my stomach, that might lift for occasional moments here and there, but never for long. I just worry about everything [at least that's how it feels]. I worry about what's actually real, and also about what I *think* might happen. I worry about the present. I worry about the future. Friends have told me that therapy would help me [they call it 'C.B.T.' – whatever that means?], but I'm too worried about what it would involve that I haven't done it yet; and also, I feel a bit – no, *very* stupid if I have to admit all I worry about – I mean, is it normal? All I know is, that at the moment, it's paralysing me...

"You judge me, because of what you can *see*, **but** this affects me in ways that are *hidden from sight*."

I've got **O.C.D.** [at least that's what my son tells me], and I think I probably do. I see the signs, and if I'm completely honest, I've known for a while. Should I get a proper assessment? Not really sure if there's any point – at least not at my age – but I've been feeling more and more that I should at least do some research – just to see if I'm doing all I can to manage it. I think I'm quite good already [at managing it] – but a bit of a self-check wouldn't hurt me. Patterns, colours, symmetry, tidiness, things being in order, objects facing a certain way, posters with grammar or format errors...those stressors have always been there in my life [to a greater or lesser extent], and also at times, other more repetitive behaviours as well [light switches, checking the door is locked or electric appliances are off, having to do things a certain number of times, avoiding joins in the pavement tiles etc.]. When I was growing up, O.C.D. wasn't really a thing, or at least, *I'd* never heard of it, so, in a way, I've carried it through my life as a bag on my shoulders. It's just always been there. Recently, in the words of my son, I've started to 'own it', admit it to myself, accept it's a part of who I am; not necessarily bad, just a fact of my life. As I've done that more and more [admitted it to myself] I've felt freer...and

it does make me wonder whether getting a formal diagnosis would complete that journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance, enabling me to move into the rest of my life embracing this O.C.D. part of me, and as much as I think I'm managing it quite well on my own; maybe the extra support might not be such a bad thing...

"You judge me, because someone else you know has the *same* diagnosis to me, **but** the way they deal with it is completely *different*."

I struggle with **depression** which has been SO dark and strong that sometimes I've only just held on to life itself [although at other times, it's lifted and given me moments of peace and calm within]. It scares me, because it always seems to be there, close by, never fully leaving me alone. I can be going along, just fine [well, at least relatively fine], and then suddenly, I dive head-first into a pit where NOTHING at all helps, and I sit for hours on end just staring at a wall, with no motivation to do anything. In these times, NOTHING anyone else can say or do makes the slightest bit of difference, which is hard for those who love me, as I see they are *really* trying to help. Even my prescription drugs [which are at their limit], don't lift me out, although I'd dread to think how I'd be without them! For people who've never experienced this – they simply don't get it, and I *hate* when they try to offer their advice or solutions. I like, REALLY HATE IT...

"You judge me, because you have *your* own experience, **but** that hasn't included walking in *my* shoes."

I've been diagnosed with **P.T.S.D.** [by my psychiatrist] but I've never been a soldier or fought in a war. I say that, because the two things seem to be connected in a lot of people's minds. Mine comes from multiple layers of trauma over many years, but it's still too personal for me to share here. I can't really tell you clearly how it affects me, so I'll get my partner to write that bit, as they live with me and care for me: "*she gets nightmares and flashbacks to the past; all the time, and often feels that she's actually there again, with all the terror that she had then, and it's very hard to bring her back from the past to the present. Sometimes, she feels that she's had a good sleep, but I've had a disturbed one as she's*

been moaning and moving around a lot in the night – as her brain is obviously doing overtime trying to process everything. In the day-time, any sudden noise or movement makes her jump; she's always on alert [they call it hypervigilance], like a scared rabbit caught in the headlights of a car; tense; never switching off to rest or relax, hard to concentrate, difficulty reading or processing information or remembering things, gets worn out easily, controlled by her feelings in that moment; her past trauma disabling her present peace and joy”...I guess what they've written is true, but I can't really see it myself, except to know that I'm not right, but can't seem to do anything about it. I have this thing, am on a cocktail of medication, and don't have any real hope that anything will ever change...

*“You judge me, because you've got *faulty information* from social media and the internet, **but** you've never taken the time to check out the *facts*.”*

I **self-harm** [although not in the way most people think about it], but I don't really care about myself enough to get support. Sometimes, those close to me try to reach out and help me, but I cover it up, or deny it, or pretend it's not so bad – but when I'm left alone – I know that it is [bad]. I have no problem caring for others [as I often do], but don't put any time or effort on me, although if you were to ask me “why?”, I really don't have an answer. I don't properly feed myself, wash myself [or my clothes] or take care of my personal hygiene; but I manage to do enough that publicly, with others, no-one would really know – and I keep people at a distance so they never find out. I'm just too exhausted to go through the effort I'd need to change [if I ever had the motivation to change – which at the moment, I don't]. I seem to be doing OK in my work and social life without bothering too much with any self-care, so probably I'll continue as I am, even though at times I'm shit-scared that it will all spiral into a level of self-neglect that would be really hard to get out of...

*“You judge me, because it's *easier* than getting to know the real me, **but** building a relationship, although *harder*, would be more rewarding for us both.”*

I have what I think is called **social anxiety**. I get really nervous around people, even those I know quite well, and it makes me want to avoid them all-together, so often I do, and retreat into my shell. Most people just think I'm an introvert, which probably I am, but this is different. I get totally worked-up before a social gathering, worrying what I'll say if anyone talks to me. I never know how to start a conversation with another person that I don't know very well, so am often really quiet. I *never* make eye contact with someone in case they start talking to me and I freak out. I've not always been like this, but have noticed it getting worse and worse. My mum tries to push me into meeting others, but that just feels like she really doesn't get me at all, so it makes me push her away. I dread to think how I'll cope when I have to live on my own; I'll probably just shut myself in my room and never go out...

"You judge me, because with your personality type, this just *doesn't* happen, **but** as opposites tend to attract, you might find yourself with a partner to whom it *does*."

I suffer with **stress** [and have done since I was a teenager]. I had 10 years on medication, but as I didn't change my lifestyle, when I finally came off the meds, it was just as bad as before. I pick up burdens *really* easily – get stressed over the small things as well as the big ones. I don't think it will *ever* go away, but with age has come wisdom [some at least] to be able to put things into my daily life to manage it. I've had to make some fairly radical changes to my lifestyle, as well as admit to myself that this *is* an issue that affects me...but with that self-realization has also come a freedom...to be me...and live my life within the boundaries that have to be there to keep my stress from paralyzing me completely. Does it *always* work? NO! Do I *sometimes* still let stress get the better of me? YES! but, in general, I'm able to function quite well in life, and the time gap between becoming stressed and then dealing with it, has become less and less...

"You judge me, because you're scared of what *you* don't know, **but** can you imagine for a moment how *I* feel most of the time?"