



Each of us
is part of the solution
Let's end mental health stigma together



We can't do this alone!

“ Even to write these words feels like a bit of a betrayal of my own story. Because it's like the opposite of what I've done for years. Part of why it all was as bad as it was was because I thought I could do it all on my own. That I needed no help.

But I know better now. And that's why I can write these words to you full heartedly. My life didn't start to change, to get better until I reached out for help. At the beginning it was only “professionals” that I opened up to. But slowly it dawned on me that I needed more. More people that know what's going on. Friends. Co-Warriors – as I like to call them.

Although some people might say that my problems started in my early childhood, they did not really begin to kick in until I was 15. By “they”, I mean Borderline Personality Disorder, Depression, Addiction, PTSD and anxiety. But then they did kick in.

I've lost days, weeks, months, years to these illnesses. I was suicidal for weeks – again and again. I drank, I self-harmed, I was desperate. But only when I was alone. As soon as there were people around me I was the happy girl that played in a band, led the drama group, sang in the choir, finished school and university with good grades, traveled to New Zealand – you see, where this is going. From the outside, everything was fine. On the inside, I was a lonely, miserable, suicidal, sad, depressed, confused, addicted and helpless girl. This went on for years. More than a decade. By now, I've spend half my life alongside my invisible illnesses.

No need to ask why all this is as it is. I'm a huge fan of radical acceptance. I can't change my past. I just have to learn to live with it.

So what changed? What made me see a therapist? Nothing really. I just tried, again and again, to get better. On my own. And it always worked. For a few weeks. And then it got even worse.

And this circle repeated itself. With the only difference that the lows got ever lower. And finally, that's when the healthy, the warrior-part of my brain kicked in and started to tell me “Maybe it's time to tell someone. Maybe this is too big for you. Maybe, we should stop do trivialize the situation.” At the beginning very gently. But once it was there, I couldn't get rid of it any more.

It took a couple of months, but finally I found a wonderful therapist that I'm still seeing today. Don't know where I'd be without her. It didn't take long until the word “borderline” had it's first appearance in one of our sessions. My immediate reaction was “**WTF?**” **No way!** And then I got curious. And bought a book. And it changed my life.

Until this day I just thought I was weird. That I was the only one not getting their shit together. Having these thoughts. Feeling this way. But in this book, other people wrote things that felt like they were writing about me! About my life! It was amazing! My “being-different” finally had a name. And I read, that there was therapy. That there are tools. That it can get better.

What followed was a three-months-inpatient-therapy in Hamburg. Which wasn't perfect or flawless, but one of the most important experiences I've had so far. And it was also the time it dawned on me that something is seriously wrong in our society when it comes to mental illness. The way some of the other patients talked about themselves and their illness – so full of shame. Feeling embarrassed and defective in a way that would never have been there if they had cancer or diabetes or a broken leg or ANY other illness.

I started to realize that things have to change. And that I have to, want to be a part of that change. We have to change the way we talk about mental illness. But first: we have to talk about mental illness!



I started a blog about my life with my “special effects”. And I write about it not in a depressing, sad or discouraging way – well, sometimes yes because it’s part of my life. But it’s not everything bad and sad. I have good moments, good days, even good weeks. I travel. I write. I laugh. I do lots of normal things.

Because my “mentals” are not my life. They are a huge part, but they are not everything I am. I put a lot of time and energy into talking and writing about my experiences. Because it helps me. And it helps others. No matter how black my day, how deep the depression, how active the borderline – when I receive a message from a stranger telling me that my blog helped them; when I talk to somebody online or offline who tells me, that my words gave them hope – I can’t help it but to feel better.

To feel needed. It strengthens my resilience. To see, to feel that I can make a difference. And if I can’t get it together to feel worthy enough of holding on for the sole worth of myself then I will do it for all the others out there, that can’t speak up for themselves because they are too busy waging their daily wars.

For the biggest part of my life I lived by the rule “I will, I have to do this alone”. But only since I started to see that I needed help things started to change. Helping others helps me. I hope, that you will find the right help for you.

Seek for support. Try different kinds of support. Groups might not be your thing. Maybe it’s social media (really amazing how many people with similar stories you can find out there - truly amazing). Maybe it’s books. Maybe it’s therapy.

But look for something. Anything that shows you that you are not alone with your wars, your demons. We can do this!

#onedayatatime
#chooserecoveryeverydamnday 

Dominique, 30, Germany

You can follow Dominique’s adventures on her instagram account here: https://www.instagram.com/traveling_bpd/