

Trigger Warning: This written work contains reference to drug use and suicidal thoughts.

To Be or not to Be

Marita Schlink
Short Story

In 2016 I was given the reason why I had lived with suicidal depression all my life.

My intuitive friend recommended an Integrative Medical practitioner.

I sought every avenue of relief. I explored past life regression, twelve step programs, rebirthing, Gestalt therapy, PTSD seminars, sexual abuse survivor groups. I self-medicated with a plethora of drugs. Dope to cocaine, barbiturates plus a kaleidoscope of hallucinogenics and alcohol. Comfortably numb was my modus operandum. I explored my intergalactic family. I communed with my inner drag queen, my numerous sub-personalities while also swimming with dolphins, whales and seals. I explored every avenue to attempt some kind of reprieve from my torturous never-ending depressive episodes. They were not really episodes. They were a full time, lifelong feature length movie. I sat in front of this MD. My intuition prompted me to tell the truth.

In the past feelings of shame prevented me from full disclosure. I felt broken, an imposter. I had never known what it was to feel okay. The MD looked directly into my eyes,

"How can I help you?"

I broke down and sobbed. I vomited a litany about my mental "unwellness" with machine gun precision. I told him the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The truth of my several failed suicide attempts to my awareness at the age of seven that I could not get out of bed. I was labelled lazy, lackadaisical and a life avoider. I became aware of the label "depression" at the age of 33. I ticked every box in the on-line survey "Do you think you are depressed?" I came out.

"I have depression"

All my close family and friends said

"We know".

They told me that I would disappear for weeks, sometimes, months on end, with a foot note saying

"Don't worry about me I will be ok. Just leave me alone." I recall a deep need for reclusiveness. A sense of stillness.

I needed to navigate the uncharted territory of deep catatonic depression. The outside world demanded too much. I craved to be sedated for a period of three months. I learnt that we acquire a new blood stream in this time frame, so my intuitive inclination was to lay low and just breath until I could surface yet again.

At my worse, I would stand in front of my bathroom mirror, in the early hours of the morning rocking back and forth with my hands over my head. A waterfall of silent tears accompanied an internal mantra 'my brain is broken, help me, help me, help me'.

At this nadir I would be close to admitting myself into a psyche ward. When the MD heard my story, he quietly said that he had a good idea of what was going on.

It involved specific pathology tests. A two week wait. After a life time a few weeks is nothing.

The next consultation delivered the news. I had a metabolic imbalance called

Pyroluria. It is a malfunction of the haemoglobin which manufactured pyrroles. The pyrroles would devour my zinc, vitamin B6 and omega 6's which are the precursors to make dopamine and serotonin. The MD basically said that I had NEVER had the ability to make these essential neurotransmitters. I had suffered at the hands of my own faulty biochemistry. He compassionately said two statements that initiated my full recovery.

"You will get better" and "It was not my fault".

IT WAS NOT MY FAULT.....

I had been a Naturopath for 22 years. I had researched every known cause for depression. I had participated in every eating and exercise regime. Looked at supplements and anti-depressants. I lead a monastic meditative drug free lifestyle.

Nothing sustained me for any length of time.

Psychiatrists, Counsellors, Psychologists, Reiki, Acupuncture, Floatation tanks and massage. The 'wounded healer'.

I felt like a failure, a broken human. I lived in the shadowland of shame and guilt. I labelled myself a failed bipolar alcoholic cause I did not tick all the boxes yet had the tendencies.

The MD mentioned if I had gone on ward that I would have probably been misdiagnosed, given meds that could have tipped me over the edge. So, someone somewhere was looking after me.

My wholistic approach and knowledge to health propelled me to seek out the causative factors of the dis/ease to then apply the appropriate treatment. I walked out of that consult and called my son. I told him the news. We both cried with relief and joy. He was happy to hear that at last my suffering will be over.

I was prescribed the nutrients that my body needed. I have taken them daily since and have not had any bouts of depression.

My whole life changed.

I have experienced excessive grief with ongoing changes and challenges that day to day life offers yet have not suffered any bouts of depression.

I view any mental unwellness as a bio-chemical/emotional/spiritual imbalance that needs to be individually treated.

I do not use the term mental illness because I feel we are all a little mentally ill at ease. I now check in with myself. Setting boundaries. Allowing myself time out. Learning to say "NO". Meditating and surrounding myself with a tsunami of unconditional love. Putting my hand up when I need support. My family, friends and my spiritual creative life are my ongoing ballast. My passion for life, love, adventure and creativity are my true North.

I am happy and I believe. If I was able to seek and find answers and reprieve....

All is Possible.

Deep gratitude for all my "beautiful monsters".

The journey has just begun.

Destination Unknown.

Eternally Grateful.