



#depressionhurts

My Story— Connell

My name is Connell, I'm 18 and this is my story.

I'm Connell and for about 3 years things have been crazy, a year ago I was diagnosed with bi polar and since then things have improved, a bit.

I've a Mum, Dad and a sister, my family loves me I know though I've often hated them. A cousin has bi polar but he's not the same as me and I didn't want to be the same as him.

I started to have voices in my head when I was about 14, till then I was pretty normal, great family, lots of sport, really close to my Mum, she gave me everything, I had a nice room, clothes, things, nothing unusual about me, just a teenager. But things changed—like my friends. I started to hang out with a crowd who made me feel good, they took no shit from anyone. School we did our thing, bunking off as often as we could, going to one of their houses, smoking, music, just stuff.

School started to be a problem, I was the class joker, my parents were called down, they believed me at first, not the school but it kept happening, eventually I was expelled, I was 15. That took time and things were getting bad at home too, I didn't want to be there, there were arguments and fights all the time with my parents. I'd climb out of the window and disappear to my friends, for hours, a night, sometimes days. My phone would ring and I'd know my Mum and Dad were looking for me, I didn't care. Often I wouldn't answer or just tell them to F*** off. I'd never tell them where I was. My friends would tell their parents, I was badly treated at home, so they'd feel sorry for me and put me up. My sister even came to the door of my friends house one night, I heard her tell how desperate my Mum and Dad were to find me, I just laughed as my mates Mother said she hadn't seen me, it was a great joke, I felt high on it. Things went like this for about a year or maybe two.

Things just got more crazy, we started to take cars, I could drive a bit, smashed cars a couple of times but no one hurt, we got away with it. Took my Dad's car one night, smashed that, Guards convinced him to press charges and he said he would but he backed off in the end. This stuff went on for over a year, Guards often at the house, my Mum and Dad looking so ill and trying to get help for me. I didn't want it and there wasn't much help



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to be found. I saw a careers guy who told me I could start at a new school and it was all arranged, started the new school but hated it so just left.

My Mum was trying everywhere and everyone for help, she knew I was sick but no one would believe her, they believed I was just bad, another young thug. Things got really bad at home, arguments all the time. I stayed away at friends houses as much as I could., I felt real hatred for my family, once threatened my Mum and really scared her and squared upto my Dad, I didn't care.

I just wanted to be with my mates, it all seemed great when we were together but things got serious when my mate and I broke into a car and tried to torch it, we didn't know but security cameras got us doing it.

The Guards came again and this time I had to go to court, I didn't really care but my family hated the shame, they were made responsible for me and had to be there as well. I didn't really care about anything anymore, all I wanted was to be with my mates, smoke, drink, do a few drugs. My family were on to me all the time about how bad my friends were, how they didn't care and they were right—in court my mate stitched me up, said I was the one who did everything. We were mates, I couldn't believe it.

I did a runner—went for over 8 weeks, slept rough some of the time, other nights in barns, did a bit of labouring here and there for a few farmers. I got messages from my Mum and Dad but wouldn't answer them. It got **so** bad, I felt like shit, finally I had to come home, dirty, clothes stinking, like a tramp. The Guards were called to say I'd been found, they'd been looking for me, I was arrested, they said because I'd absconded. I had to go and face court again. The Judge listened to my Mum and got Probation guy and someone else to get reports done, then she sent me to a secure unit in a young offenders place.

It was the worst and I was really scared, monitored all the time—my family could come for visits but they lived 160 miles away, it wasn't easy but they came but I felt so alone. I had tests, talks with a psychiatrist—they diagnosed bi polar and gave me tablets to take. My Mum and Dad were happy because at last they knew something was wrong and I wasn't just a criminal or some thing.



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After a few weeks, I was allowed home but supervised, no contact to be had with my mates. The court was still hanging over my head but I was given time for drugs to take effect, they did but I hated taking them. I started to see a psychiatrist at the local hospital, drugs were changed, I was put on lithium now as well as other stuff, felt a bit better.

The court thing is on file still, it'll soon be a year since then, I've tried college but couldn't hack it, couldn't concentrate or fit the routine. I've met a girl, she liked me, didn't judge me, things moved fast with us and we now have a place we share. Most of the time, things are ok but I see my psychiatrist still, things are better with my family but I know there is still stuff to get right.

I just don't know if it will ever really be right, I'm 18, I'm clever, I've learned to drive, I'm unemployed, I have no qualifications, I have a criminal record, I'm on medication just to stay 'normal', I have a mental illness, which took too long to be diagnosed.

I feel my life would be different if school and the experts had listened to my Mum when I first got bad and not just written me off as trouble when really I was sick!.

The last 3 years have been a nightmare for me and my family and it didn't need to be so bad, I hated the Judge at the time but it's down to her and my Mum, that I did get diagnosed and got some help.

I'm happy enough now, I try to take each day as it comes but I don't know what the future will bring, where will I get a job, will I always have to be on tablets.

I wish my life was like it used to be before this.