Drowning Part Two! Tackling Depression!

August 4, 2014 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

Drowning Part One!

Nausea and exhaustion merged and sleep took over. I woke the next morning in my hotel room curled up in the middle of the bed hugging the pillow. Something had come over me last night and it had been cathartic. I knew I needed to do better. “Sophie is not coming back,” I told myself. “The good thing is the joy she brought you for eight years,” I mumbled. I remind myself of this

daily. I remember when Oprah lost one of her white Lab's, Gracie after one year. She watched her die from swallowing a small toy. I had just gotten Sophie and could not even image the pain she felt. I shuddered to think about it. I had Sophie for eight wonderful years.

As I made my morning tea I started to remember that Sophie had come to BlogHer last year with me. She was the bell of the lobby at the Sheraton Hotel and the official greeter at the MultiCulti party. I reflected on how happy she was going from arm to arm that night. I like the fact that BlogHer is dog friendly and Sophie fit right in! She was definitely Ms. Personality.

When I arrived back to Chicago I knew changes of some sort had to be made, but the moment I put my key in that door and there was no Sophie barking like crazy, dread swap over me. The worst part of being on earth without her is walking into silence each time I come home and waking in the morning without her being by my side. Adjusting to this this new life is hard, very hard. I'm not sure how long it's going to take for me to be at a better place.

My grief is real and so is my depression. I feel them in the debt of my Soul, yet there is a part of me that is fighting, that wants to fight. I want to find a balance. I don't intend to avoid the grief but at the same time, I don't want the grief to control me. I didn't like how I felt in that hotel room in San Jose. I never want to be that self absorbed/consumed by one thing. I never want any one thing to have all of me. It's bad enough that HIV/AIDS has dictated a good portion of my life for most of my life. I want to control what I can.

I understand that my depression is what the experts called "situational depression," which typically occurs after some sort of trauma and or traumatic changes in your life. In my case, the sudden lost of Sophie. I'm having difficulties adjusting to the changes brought on by Sophie's passing and I just fucking miss her.

Situational depression is different for everyone as is major depression. For me, there hasn't been a day that has gone by that my heart hasn't ached for my baby girl. I've cried at least 32 of the 35 days she's been gone.

Sleep is a far away thing that I believe will come back to me one day, but right now I haven't slept through the night if I slept at all. It takes everything and I mean EVERYTHING I got to do anything other than read and knit. And of course, I've been eating my way to hell and back.

It’s been a week since BlogHer and that night in my hotel room consumed by Reese’s Peanut Butter cookies and S’mores with bacon on top. I’m proud to say that I have made some changes. **No, I’m not better, I just made some changes for the better.** I live in the real world and I know that it is not going to get better over night, but I have at least stopped myself from total destruction. This is my plan!!

1) **Working Out!** Exercise is important for me. Not only does it make me feel better overall, it actually increases endorphins. The experts say that 1 hour of exercise will work as well as anti-depressants for mild depression. Speaking of anti-depressants, the week Sophie passed I started Trazodone because it has a sleep add. I stopped last week because I don’t like being groggy in the morning and still sleep deprived because sometimes the medication helps and other times it does not.

BTW I got 3 days of Crossfit in last week. That’s a start! If I don’t make it to the gym, I make it up with the amount of walking I do. For example, I often walk home from therapy,which is about 3 miles. Or I try to take a walk on the lakefront.

2) **Eating!** I'm an emotional eater for sure and I have grain 10 pounds since Sophie passed. My goal is to eat as clean as possible, which is where I was before my life changed.

For me eating cleans means that I I'm following either the Paleo Diet or Low-Fodmap diet set by my Gastroenterologist, usually, I'm somewhere in between. Following these diets are important because they help my Irritable Bowl Syndrome. Since my eating has been whack, my body has been out of whack. I've become constipated again. This is not good!! I have no desire to be back on laxatives again. Remember the fiasco? The benefit of eating clean is weight control.

3) **Not Setting Myself up for Failure!** Because I'm such an emotional eater, what I bring into my house is important. On top of that, life is to short to deprive myself of sugar. *shrugs* I like dessert after a meal always has, always will. To be sure, I don't want to over indulge. I make sure that I have fruit in the house at all times. I also buy popcorn in small bags like Skinny Pop or Trader Joe's Lite Kettle Corn.

I get cookies that go far in portion size verses calories. For example, Trader Joe's Ginger Snaps, are 130 calories for 6 cookies. By the time I reach the fifth cookie that impulse to eat has passed and the damage is minimum. BTW, they have them in tons of different flavors. Now, with those big ass cookies I was eating in San Jose, I had to be taking in close to 500-800 calories a cookie.

4) **Therapy!** I missed a lot of my therapy appointments prior to Sophie passing because of my health. Remember I was at home shut down on IV medication, then the liposuction procedure? Then our July routine was thrown off by scheduling for both me and my therapist. I'm back at it, no missed appointments. This is an important part of my life. Therapy is a neutral place to process my pain without any judgments or expectations. It always leads me to a good place.

5) **Be Kind to Myself!** If I don't follow through on any of the above. I forgive myself at night and wake to a new day with fresh possibilities.

6) **I’m getting another dog**! I know that I cannot replace Sophie, nor would I ever try. In fact, all of my dogs have had there own personality and brought something different and wonderful to my life. But I’ve learned something new about myself in the last 35 days since Sophie’s death. I need whatever it is a dog brings to my life and whatever it is that I bring to theirs. This is the first time

in 21 years that I've been without a poodle and I'm not going to deprive myself because I cannot have Sophie. Stay Tuned!

Coping with lost of any sort is hard. Each of us must figure out the best path that will lead to the best outcomes. The darkness will pass if we don't fight against the darkness, like going against the gain. The darkness will pass if you don't plant yourself in the darkness, holding onto it for the life of you. It will pass, for nothing stays the same. Remember, no experience is ever wasted, not even moments of darkness. As for me, I'm sure when the light starts to trickle through the darkness, I will look back and say, Aha, I see what was learned in these moments of darkness.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.