One Day At A Time!

November 11, 2014 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

For the last few months I've been sitting still. Not because I didn't want to move but I've just been stuck. Depression has that way on you. It seems to just grab you and not let go. It paralyzes you in the worst kind of way.

Over the years I've had mild bouts of depression but nothing on this magnitude since I transitioned to AIDS twenty- two years ago. Back then I thought that I was never going to get AIDS and when I did, it caused the worst mental health crisis of my life. I cried all day and I was barely making it through my daily routine. I started medication but I think the turning point was when I started speaking at high schools here in Chicago. God gave my life new purpose and meaning and that turned things around.

But this time there has been no turning point just slow progress.

Over the last couple of years I've had so much trauma in my life. Any one thing could have triggered depression but combined they were the monster that paralyzed me. People take trauma lightly, but it has an impact on ones life. Over these years my health has required so much to manage.

On and off IV medication to treat the drug resistant herpes because my immune system can't fight it off with regular pills. My veins becoming occluded as a result, not one but two ports placed that didn't work. Diarrhea I couldn't control, then constipation with no relief. And I still have 15 pills to take a day. My finances hitting so rock bottom with no speaking engagements in sight. It’s more than a notion to have to choose between groceries or your light bill. Then being kicked out of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority over my tweets and the unkindness that followed. Women who called me sister turned on me because I dared to speak up. And quite as it’s kept, some still dig at me via social media. Then my precious poodle Sophie died in July. One week she was barking for bacon and then the next week I was told she had cancer. She became so sick in a matter of a week I had to put her down.

Then let’s not forget, HIV itself effects the neurons in the brain that effects your Serotonin. Those living with HIV are prone to depression. So over the years I’ve been on and off antidepressants to keep it in tack. But I was caught off guard when Sophie died. I had been off Zoloft for a few months and before I realized it I was so far gone into a deep depression. Depression is a strange illness. It not only takes away your joy but simple things like daily living. It paralyzes you in a way that even taking shower is to overwhelming.

The fighter in me knew that I was in trouble back in August. My therapist and I shifted gears. For a while I was having sessions twice a week. Then she referred me to a incriable psychiatrist. The psychiatrist wasn't taking any new patients, but when I called she was the one to actually answer the phone, and bam I'm in! So she's been working to get me properly medicated these last couple of months. And they both have been working to help me fight depression as best as I can. The way God works is awesome. He seems to get me what I need, you just have to be willing to go for it.

At first I was guilty that super woman hadn’t kicked in. I kept telling myself, ”Pull it together girl." But honestly, I didn’t have the energy to push or pull. Depression takes away everything but your breath.

Then I had to accept that this is an illness like any other and you have to do what you can each day, one day at time. Now, for sure you have to do something or it will consume you. But I had to accept that my something is baby steps. But baby steps are better than no steps. This has been hard for a super woman like me. But I accept my victories whatever they are and however they come. Like I’ve showered everyday for the last three weeks and actually read my morning devotional with tea. I was going two-three days without a shower. For real y’all. The last two weeks I've opened my computer that was a victory a small step that got me here today writing a blog for the first time in two months. Understand something, depression is so overwhelming that even opening the computer can be to much.

So I take my small victories in this war on the way to winning this battle. But I'm not letting shame or pressure to be what people need me to be to guide what I do or don't do. If I feel like posting on Social Media I do. If I feel like talking or responding to a text or call I do. But if I don't oh well, prayerfully there will be another day.

For sure I can see progress. I have come a long way since my Sophie died. I know that God still has work for me. I have not given up, even if it seems like I have. I'm just fighting this battle, One Day At A Time.

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