



The View From My Window

~ a personal journey through mental health

by *Jackson Fisher*

Chapter 5

This one: Treatment and recovery to present

Through the first few entries for this series, I've done a lot of talking about how horrible I've felt in my process to help show the truth to my story and I've urged you to trust the process and allow the professionals and those around you to help you and promised things get better. I understand that having hope left is a hard thing to do, believe me I was there, but hopefully with this entry I can legitimize my claims that the process works as I finally get to share some positives.

As I sit here writing this, I am a 12x student - meaning I graduated high school and am in my extra year before university. As of now, I still haven't returned to school. I graduated almost solely with online classes. However, not getting back wasn't really a failure, instead my goals have changed. I've frequently been to school for various meetings, presentations and information sessions. The need for attending class disappeared, learning online naturally fit my learning style. Because of the confidence I gained through my counselling and recovery, I no longer needed to go to class because by the end of grade eleven and beginning of grade twelve going to class wasn't about succeeding in school, it was merely an unnecessary challenge. I let go of that and now I don't need to. I've graduated and I will attend post-secondary next year. I have no need to attend a high school class. I might in my final semester but that will purely be by choice and not a need.

I've had many big events to get to where I am now but there are three that I want to focus on. I was able to attend my graduation and prom. These two major events came in a span of three days. Ironically if I hadn't gone through all this, I probably wouldn't have attended either because I didn't really have an interest in them but I used them as stepping stones to prove myself. At graduation I slipped into the group, attended the full ceremony (which was longer than I'd been at school in years), I walked across the stage for my diploma (which would've been hard regardless of my illness), accepted my degree (ironically from a principle I had never met) and briefly attended the after party. Any one of these would've been big for me and I did them all in a row, with the support of my guidance counsellor. I did have an escape plan so to speak but didn't need it. Two days later I went out of province, something I've only done a handful of times in my life, and attended my prom. This was with

no escape plan and I had to mingle with a ton of people who I'd disappeared from years before. It was an incredibly uncomfortable time but I did it, and there were even parts I enjoyed.

A few weeks later, for my third event, I was a groomsman in a family wedding. This had me surrounded by people I didn't really know, had me in an all week event that required various levels of socializing and a ton of new things to me. It was a good time. I was worried for all three of these events. I expected myself to break and fall back to square one but I didn't! I succeeded and you can too! Now, not everything is perfect and I still have trouble sometimes. For example after the three events so close together, I had a low period because I had nothing big to focus on. I got out of that and am doing well now. There are still signs and episodes where my mental illness becomes a factor but my former self, the one I wrote the last few entries about, feels like a completely different person. All the bad thoughts feel like a lifetime ago.

This process has changed me forever. I'm now looking at a different profession as my life goals/priorities have changed, but I'm certainly better than I was. I might not have gotten back to high school or the canoe club but I succeeded in other areas, giving up on a goal doesn't always mean it was a failure, it's okay and even good to change your goals - that is progress. Along the ways weird successes will come too. One member of my team of doctors who has been very helpful is someone I was originally not supposed to see for mental health support but just to help with separate physical symptoms. I've made friends with people I probably would've never even known without my process going how it did.

You won't get back to your life before the illness; everything won't go back to the way it was, some people may stick with you for the whole process and others won't. Your new life will be different but I promise it will be better. As I said off the start, I can't write you a guidebook for success, however I hope through learning about my process you can take away some lessons or ideas, have some trust in the system or at the very least some hope.

It worked for me and there is no reason it can't work for you too.