



therapeutic alternatives, inc.

Empowering *Times*

UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE



I was 28 years old the first time I became depressed, although I didn't realize what I was experiencing. The first sign of depression was anxiety. At the time, I didn't recognize that was a precursor. I just knew something was wrong and I needed help. The anxiety became so intense that I could barely function. Within days of the anxiety starting, I began to feel very sad. The sadness turned into sorrow, and despair followed close behind. For several weeks, I lived in constant fear that I was losing my mind. I remember calling my sister and telling her I was afraid that I was going to need hospitalization.

She convinced me to see my medical doctor who prescribed Prozac. About three weeks after starting it, my anxiety and depression were at bay. I started to feel "normal" again.

Over the next several years, like so many others do, I stopped taking my medication several times. But, each time I quit, I soon thereafter realized that I needed it, that my ability to have purpose in life was tied to my medication compliance. My antidepressant was changed several times, as the positive effects of each one seemed to fade over time.

A couple of decades passed, and I had my episodes of sadness; but, I quickly bounced back each time. I went through life hiding my illness. Although I had worked in the mental health field for over 25 years, I couldn't bring myself to disclose it. I told myself that no one else needed to know, not even those who were closest to me. I would tell others they had nothing to be ashamed of, all the while holding my inner thoughts close. "What would others think?" I couldn't admit what many perceive as a weakness.

The depression I have experienced is sometimes referred to as treatment-resistant or treatment-refractory depression. I am one of many people who can't be treated with one anti-depressant. I take two different types, plus a low dose of an "add-on" medication, Abilify, which is typically used for people who live with bipolar disorder. It has also been found to be effective for people who live with depression when an anti-depressant alone doesn't work, and it definitely improves my quality of life. I worry about the side effects of Abilify; but, after trying to discontinue it several times, I know that I can't live an enjoyable life without it, at least not at this point in my life. When given the choice of potential side effects or simply existing in a dark place, give me light any day of the week. Before I started taking Abilify, my psychiatrist and I seriously considered electro-convulsive therapy (ECT). I was so depressed that I would have tried anything.

Scientists think that as much as 40% of depression is linked to heredity, and I believe that is the case with the depression that I have lived with. Throughout my early childhood, I heard about family members who were "sent off" because they had "nervous breakdowns." My maternal grandmother was committed several times to

state hospitals; however, she had 17 children and 14 of them lived into adulthood. So, if that wasn't enough to make one have a nervous breakdown, I'm not sure what was. I imagine some of her issues were related to post-partum depression. I also have a relative who has lived with depression her entire adult life. For the past several years, she has had frequent ECT, as her depression is unmanageable with medication alone. I am fortunate in that I've never required hospitalization, although I came very close that first time and again a few years ago. There are several other relatives who have experienced depression at some point in their lives.

It's hard to explain to people who have never experienced the thoughts and feelings that come with depression just how debilitating it can be. You don't want to see anyone or talk to anyone. You want to sleep all the time, and little tasks seem impossible. Sometimes, you wander deeper and deeper into depression until you're in a position of absolute hopelessness, a place to which you would not banish your worst enemy, a place where you fear for your own safety. I have never attempted suicide, nor have I had a plan in place to harm myself; but, on a couple of occasions when I was extremely low and vulnerable, I found myself fantasizing about how easy it would be to slip away into a world where no pain exists, a place where a forever silence would be a welcome relief. I haven't visited that dark place in a long time, and for that I'm grateful.

I don't suffer from depression. I live with it. I don't "have" depression, nor does it have me. Also, I'm not sharing this part of myself to have anyone feel sorry for me. I hope no one treats me any differently. But, I do want to do my part to help erase the societal stigma that comes with mental illnesses. Many people still don't understand that mental illness cannot just be controlled by one's will-power. It's no different than a physical illness such as diabetes, only the organ that is affected is the brain instead of the pancreas. Maybe someday mental illnesses will be understood in the same way as physical illnesses. Meanwhile, I will continue to use my understanding, experience and knowledge of mental health to help other people - and myself - stay as healthy as possible; and, I'll listen to others as they talk about their experiences with mental illnesses. When we take time to listen closely, we uncover features that sound familiar... hints of ourselves, and a connection to other people that sends us down a path where we eventually understand that "normal" may not really exist. ~ Kenny Burrow, CEO

INSIDE THIS ISSUE... Depression; GAST Update; Randleman Day Program; Santa Claus; Rodney Fulton; Employee of the Year, Charity White; Freda Kletsch, 25 years with TA

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

GERIATRIC/ADULT SPECIALTY TEAMS UPDATE

Spotlight on John D. Dawson, III



John Dawson is a registered nurse who works on the Geriatric/Adult Mental Health Specialty Team (GAST) in Brunswick, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Carteret, and Onslow Counties. John is a valuable member of our GAST team. He is a team player, always ready with a smile and a joke.

He is dependable and ready to help other team members when needed. John will go to great lengths to provide what our facilities need and has a willingness to be flexible with his training schedule to accommodate all shifts if necessary.

John has been a member of the Trillium TA-GAST team for the past 5 years. Prior to joining the team, he worked as a Hospice nurse, home health nurse and staff nurse/nurse coordinator with the New Hanover Regional Behavioral Hospital in Wilmington. He resides in Brunswick County, a third generation member of the Dawson family in Varnamtown, a quaint fishing village on the Lockwood Folly River, incorporated as a town in 1988.

John is an active member of the Dixon Chapel United Methodist Church, serving as Sunday school superintendent since 1991, and is currently a church choir member. One church event he is very proud of participating in is the Annual Oyster Roast which is well-known across North and South Carolina for being held 62 consecutive years. This past year was the first year the Roast was cancelled due to weather, much to everyone's disappointment!

John was recently elected Alderman, filling the seat vacated by his father, John D. Dawson, II (2010-2015). Swearing in ceremony was held mid-December, 2015. He is also a Mason; and, when he reaches the status of Master Mason, he will be the first son of a Master Mason in 40 years that has served in the Shallotte Chapter #0727.

We are proud to have John as a GAST team member.

~ Dianne Phillips, LPC, NCC
Certified Gerontologist
Geriatric Mental Health Specialty Team

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do."

~Edward Everett Hale

RANDLEMAN DAY PROGRAM

FOOD DRIVE



Randleman Day Program club members recently held a food drive to assist the Christian United Outreach Center (CUOC) with providing food to people within Randolph County. CUOC is a local non-profit organization that helps people who are experiencing hardships such as loss of job, sickness or unexpected expenses such as car repair. They also take donations of clothing, house items, and other merchandise which they sell in their thrift store. The money from the selling of items is then used to help people with expenses such as rent or mortgage payments. Thank you

to the day program members (above) for reaching out to the community with food to help people during difficult circumstances.

FIERY FEAST

Randleman Day Program members recently enjoyed a night out at Fire and Sticks Japanese Restaurant in High Point, NC where the chef prepared their food at their table.



"The fondest memories are made gathered around the table."

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to teach classes in music, art, and any other recreational activities. Also, with the assistance and guidance of people we support, we would like to create photo journals that demonstrate their personalities and goals. If you are interested in volunteering your skills and time, please contact us at 336-626-1720. We are excited about the avenues that could be opened for people we support through the expression of their emotions and talents.

HERE COMES SANTA CLAUS



Jonathan Doyle (left) enjoyed celebrating Christmas with family and friends. He also enjoys going out to eat and finding fun things to do in the community. Jonathan volunteers at Meals on Wheels. He has a great sense of humor and makes friends easily.

.....



Santa visited Candor and Greensboro group homes on Christmas morning and made some people very happy to receive gifts which they had requested in their letters to Santa.



They also celebrated Christmas with various activities such as the making of candy canes and gingerbread cookies. Bobby, at far left, enjoyed helping with the candy canes.

.....



Cheyenne Jackson and Jessie Frazier (left, bottom) were visited by Santa at Randleman Day Program. Thank you to Santa, Eddie Thomas. Pastor Thomas often visits Brookstone Haven of Randleman and preaches. He has made many friends at Brookstone.

"Blessed are they who have the gift of making friends, for it is one of God's greatest gifts. It involves many things; but, above all, the power of going out of one's self and appreciating what is noble and loving in another." ~ Thomas Hughes

ADVOCACY REALLY MATTERS

WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO ME

FEATURING RODNEY FULTON



Rodney Fulton's many trips to see Santa paid off Christmas morning when he found his Spongebob hat and his Super Mario and Luigi Amiibo toys which can be used with the Wii U GamePad and New Nintendo 3DS series.

Rodney attends his local high school. He loves music. He also enjoys finding fun activities in the community, one of which is horseback riding. Rodney is also in the photo below enjoying the 2015 Christmas Party at Therapeutic Alternatives, Inc.



"What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity. These are but trifles, to be sure; but scattered along life's pathway, the good they do is inconceivable." ~ Joseph Addison



EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to 2015 Employee of the Year, Charity White, Paraprofessional at Candor Group Home. Charity attended a recent Quality Improvement Core Team Meeting and received a surprise. Marie Parsons, Charity's supervisor, had brought Charity to the meeting under false pretenses. About halfway through the meeting, Dean Wilson, CFO, and Kenny Burrow, CEO, stood and announced that Charity is TA's 2015 Employee of the Year. (Kenny and Charity are at left at the meeting.)



O
U
R

F
R
E
D
A

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER: Eric Taylor, Group Home Director

OCTOBER: Kathleen Cole, Psychosocial Rehab Director

NOVEMBER: Marie Parsons, Group Home Director

DECEMBER: Jerra Roberts, GAST Supervisor

Teamwork: "None of us is as smart as all of us." ~Ken Blanchard

CONGRATULATIONS ON 25 YEARS WITH TA

Freda Kletsch, Therapeutic Alternatives (TA) COO, was recognized during a recent Quality Improvement Core Team meeting. Freda has worked for TA for 25 years in many capacities. We call Freda the Eveready bunny because of her swiftness and tenacity in getting the job done. Congratulations and thank you, Freda, for your years of dedication to the agency. We are blessed to have you guiding us with your expertise.

OUR MISSION IS TO DELIVER COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN SERVICES THAT EMPOWER PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS IN LIFE.

WE NOW HAVE A BLOG: Take a look at our blog and bookmark it so you can visit us frequently at: <http://mytahome.wordpress.com/>



Email: anita@mytahome.com

Editor: Anita B. Deaton
www.MyTahome.com

1-877-MYTAHOME
(336) 495-2700 | Fax: (336) 495-5552

Randleman, NC 27317
P.O. Box 814 | 4270 Heath Dairy Road
Therapeutic Alternatives, Inc.

