



## The Journey OF FAITH CHURCH

### My Journey

First and foremost, I give honor and glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who healed me. My journey started back in October 2010. It was an interesting year. I was 31 years old at the time and had just attended my good friend's funeral. My good friend Charon was two years younger than me. We became close friends attending Bowie State University's graduate school together. You see, Charon had been diagnosed with breast cancer. She was so young – the sad news convinced me to start self-examinations. I did and was shocked to feel a nickel-sized lump on the side of my right breast. I thought to myself, no it can't be! The first few days, I tried to ignore the lump on my breast and get it out of my mind. There was no way I could go through what my friend just experienced. After some convincing from my husband, family, and friends, I decided to make an appointment to see my gynecologist. My doctor felt the lump and referred me to a breast surgeon at Southern Maryland Hospital. From there, everything seemed like a blur. I remember my friend Reneice going with me to the appointment. I was a nervous wreck when the doctor informed me she would need to conduct a biopsy that same day. It was a painful and uncomfortable experience – one that should not be done alone. From there the days went by and the follow-up for the results came in. My husband came with me to the appointment. I felt my heart leave my body as the doctor stated, "You have breast cancer." I cried and cried as she gave me a referral to the Oncology Department at Washington Hospital Center. I first called my mom and broke down. I screamed, "I'm going to die!" My mom was calm, collected, and caring. She told me I would not die – I was strong and would fight this.

I was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. Upon accepting the reality of this horrible illness within me, I decided to fight, but most importantly **PRAY**. I would not be defeated with God on my side. I had so much to live for. God was there protecting and healing me. Everything went so fast. From the 12+ rounds of chemotherapy, partial mastectomy, lymph node dissection and breast reduction, radiation and multiple physical therapies I had due to lymphedema (condition where my arm swelled due to 18 lymph nodes being removed from my armpit), God kept me. Through all this, God kept me and gave me the will to live. Without God, the prayers of my family and friends, doctors and nurses, and the inspiration of other survivors, I would not be who I am today. It is a blessing to say I am a Survivor! All of my breast cancer warriors are Survivors from the day they are diagnosed. That is one bit of advice I keep with me. I even celebrated my survivorship and journey in 2012 with a Pink Party. It was a joyous occasion to just celebrate life and share my journey with family and friends. This May 2017 marks 6 years of being in remission. Praise God!

My journey has encouraged me to work toward initiating a support group to draw more young women of color in the Southern Maryland area who are breast cancer survivors. There aren't a lot of support groups in the area which appeal specifically to young women of color. My goal is to ensure that one is created soon. God bless all of you, and thank you for allowing me to share my journey.

Respectfully,

Shavone Murphy



## From the Editor's Corner

Dear Shavone:

Thank you for sharing your incredible testimony! Isn't it amazing how God chooses to heal in a variety of ways. Thank you for expressing your courageous adventure of faith and healing.

Editors: Debbie Kernahan-Rene' and Health and Welfare Committee Members:

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## July is “Minority Mental Health Awareness Month”

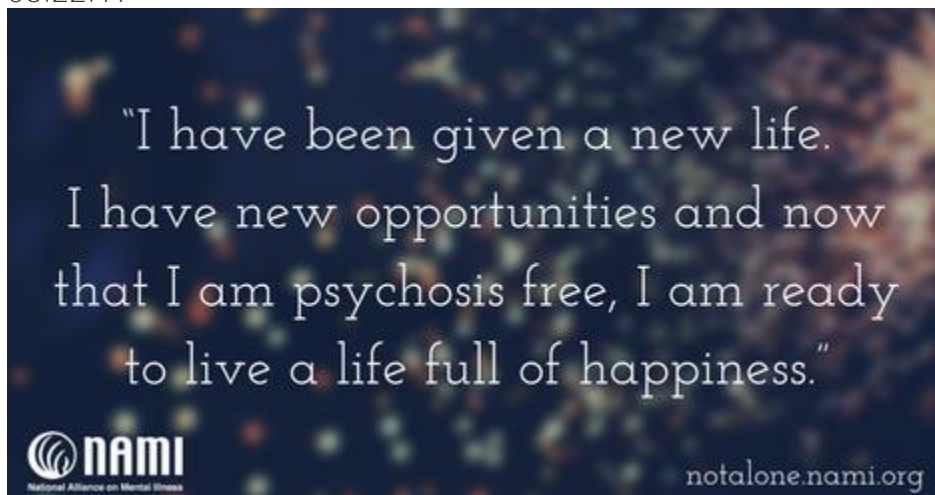
So many suffer in silence and are afraid of sharing their illness for fear of rejection. This article is from the organization NAMI – National Alliance of Mental Illness:

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# Personal Stories

## My New Life

06.22.17



Trapped in psychosis for years, I felt like my life was over. I had been in therapy for several years and we had tried medication after medication but the voices kept staying in my life. They were controlling me and I did not have control over my life or anything that was happening in my life anymore.

Being diagnosed with autism at the age of 22 was light at the end of a tunnel as I thought I had found out what I needed to know in order to go on with my life and live my life. But, as my psychotic symptoms worsened over the years, doctors began to suspect there was more to my story than just autism.

By 2013 my life was in shambles. I had self-destructed every single aspect of my life. Failed college attempt after failed college attempt had racked up thousands of dollars in student loan debt which I had no way of paying back.

I began to lose who I was. **There were days that I woke up and couldn't remember who I was.** I became the mental illness because it was so prevalent in my life that I believed it was who I was.

I began to question everything about my life. Was this real? Was that real? There became a time where I did not know whether or not something that happened in my life was real or just a hallucination or delusion.

By the age of 28 years old I was seeing dragons and talking to them. I believed they were real even when no one else did. I thought I had special powers to talk to dragons that others did not. The dragons tried to get me to hurt myself. There were times the dragons were there every day.

At this time, I was hospitalized in the mental health ward for the fifth time in my life. This is when the doctors added schizophrenia to the equation and my life became even more complex and confusing than before. Psychosis had gained control over my life.

I thought things were going to get better because when I was hospitalized they put me on a combination of different medicines that should have stopped the psychosis. Instead, the combination I was on made it worse.

I did stabilize for a few days and left the hospital. I was not stable though but only for a few days when the voices, visions, dragons and other things came back into my life and stole it from me yet again.

Encouraged to work by family and professionals I tried to get jobs. I never had a problem getting jobs because I knew how to be appropriate in the context of an employment setting. But, I had no control over the psychosis that crept itself into my life and each job I had.

I have had probably twenty different jobs. Usually I keep them for two weeks and then have some sort of psychotic episode that causes me to believe people are trying to kill me at work. I end up staying home. I do not go to work. I do not call because I am scared of them.

When I am around people I have to concentrate really hard. I want to know what is real and what is not real. How do you decipher what is real when you are conversating with others and there are dragons and demons talking with you in the group at the same time? **Is your friend really a demon or are they a real person? I'm left feeling confused and alone.**

Because of this, I require a lot of patience and a little bit of extra help doing things around the house. I feel embarrassed and ashamed. Yet, somehow deep down I know we will get through this and everything will be okay.

**Then one day at the doctor's** office something magical happens. There is a new medicine suggested which I am very skeptical of. No medicine has helped yet but what if it could? I suppose there was hope so I say we should give it a try and see how it works.

Nothing changes at first and you begin to doubt if you made the right decision. But then the doctor encourages more patience and says these things take time. I continue taking the medication as prescribed. Suddenly, I notice something different.

I am not hearing as well as I used to. So, I go to the doctor and complain of hearing **loss. The doctor asks, "Why do you think you are losing your hearing?" I reply, "I am not hearing dragons asking me to kill myself anymore."** My doctor smiles from ear to ear. **She says "Your ears are just fine. The medication is working."**

By this time in early 2017, I had already lost hope in the fact that I could ever have my life back or live a normal life without psychosis. I had contemplated suicide many times in my twenties because of the psychosis and the frustration I had with not being able to be a successful person in life. I felt like a failure and like I had let everyone down. Suddenly as the voices stopped, those feelings went away.

I have found that negative symptoms of schizophrenia improve when positive symptoms are treated and improve. The medicine has given me my life back. I am now free to have my own thoughts and feelings. The dragons are no longer in control of what I think or believe or feel. I am my own person again much like I was when I was a little kid. I am free to go about my life.

Now I have a full-time job working well over 40 hours per week. I am stable and I am functioning at high levels. I am no longer delusional and I no longer see or hear dragons. I have been free of psychosis for over two months. I could not be happier.

Schizophrenia can take a pretty good life and destroy it very quickly. I know because that happened to me. I also know there is hope and when a person is treated for schizophrenia they can put their life back together and be a successful person. I know this because that is exactly what has happened to me.

I take my medications religiously because I have seen what a wreck I am when not on medication. I know I could not survive without the medicine and would hate to see me try. I cannot say I was ever a fan of taking anti-psychotic medications before. But, now I **can't imagine my life without them. I have been given a new life. I have new** opportunities and now that I am psychosis free, I am ready to live a life full of happiness.

## Health IQ Matters

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge*

*Hosea 4:6a King James Version (KJV)*

Please check with your doctor and nutritionist to find the appropriate diet, water intake and exercise for your personal well-being and optimal health!!!

### **Let's Talk About Turmeric**

Did you know that, according to WebMD, turmeric can be used to help lower bad cholesterol in overweight people with high cholesterol – along with the partial list below of research involving turmeric?

Did you know that research has suggested that turmeric, along with other herbal ingredients, can be used to improve function in people with osteoarthritis?

Did you know that turmeric can be used to reduce itching in people with long-term kidney disease?

Did you know that a specific turmeric extract (P54FP) has been studied for reducing the number of precancerous glands in the colon of people at high risk for cancer?

Did you know that turmeric has been studied for lowering heart attack risk following bypass surgery?

### **Let's Talk About Kale**

Did you know that, according to Medical News Today.com, kale has been used to improve the symptoms of people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, along with some of its other benefits listed below?

Did you know that the fiber, potassium, vitamin C and B6 found in kale supports heart health?

Did you know that vitamin K found in kale has been used to improve calcium absorption of people with a higher risk of bone fracture?

Did you know that kale can be used to help prevent constipation and promote regularity?

Did you know that kale can be used to promote eye health, help prevent hair loss associated with iron deficiency, and promote healthy skin?