

The Curtis Greenwood Story

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While most five-year-old little boys spend their time with toy soldiers and Tonka trucks, Curtis Greenwood spent his grappling with the fear and anxiety of 'what if' scenarios. Perplexing questions such as 'what if his parents died while he was away at school' would surface often enough that his parents withdrew him from Kindergarten and secured the intervention of a psychiatrist at age five. Under psychiatric care, Greenwood was prescribed Phenobarbital to curb separation anxiety, which would become the first of many psychotropic medications to come.

With a diagnosis declared, he anticipated a sense of normalcy as he returned back to school. However, he was greeted in first grade by an unusually cruel elementary school teacher that joked about his speech impediment. Deciding the impediment was a barrier to his learning, the teacher flunked him and remanded him to another year in first grade.

Though a later internal review found the teacher negligent on this and other occasions leading to her firing, the damage to Greenwood's psyche proved irreversible. Enjoying relative success throughout the rest of his intermediate and high school education, Greenwood never felt comfortable in his own skin.

Looking back, he believes that hearing a lot of

adult problems in his household at a young age were the root causes of his 30-year bout with anxiety and depression. Compounding the issue, Greenwood received loads of unhealthy criticism which uprooted his self-esteem and self-efficacy.

"I never felt secure with myself or my family members," said Greenwood. "I was told you can do that, you're incapable, you're weak and you're a burden."

Growing up in a household where emotions were suppressed and perfection was the standard, Greenwood quickly found himself starving for validation and support. Wishing he could wave his problems away with a magic wand, Greenwood sunk to his lowest point and attempted suicide with drugs at age 15. After his unsuccessful attempt, he was later diagnosed with manic depression.

"I've always wanted love and acceptance from my family," said Greenwood. "Instead, I heard, you're weak, you're weak, you're weak; after a while, if you listen to so much of that you believe it."

Enduring years of judgmental and critical comments from his parents and siblings, Greenwood decided to reach out for help. Anxious and defeated, Greenwood searched the yellow pages for a support hotline and made his first call to HelpLine – nearly 15 years ago.

The Marysville native describes all of his experiences as meaningful and helpful.

"It wasn't always what I wanted to hear, because it meant to me that I still had a lot of work to do, to be where I wanted to be," said Greenwood. "The hotline provided different personalities and styles, and every one of them I needed at different times."

While Greenwood says that some were soothing, while others were more direct, all were equally effective and encouraging, helping him to stay on course.

He recalls on many occasions that the hotline specialist would recommend that he find other interest and friends, and to keep himself away from toxic family members.

“When he first called us, he was finding himself a lot of the time in quicksand, said Jim Rundle, Clinical Director of HelpLine of Delaware and Morrow Counties, Inc.

“And now, he knows how to walk around the quicksand; its right there and he can walk around it and stay clear enough away that he’s not in it.”

Having access to a 24-hour crisis and support line through HelpLine has made all the difference for Greenwood. Having seen nearly 40 psychiatrists over the span of 30 years, his continual relationship with the crisis hotline helped him through difficulty and empowered him past the hurt and pain.

In moving past the pain, Greenwood also made a bold decision to end his 13-year, daily regimen of a 1,000 mg Depikote medication cold-turkey.

“Taking Depikote made me physically ill,” said Greenwood. “I never planned or anticipated going off of it, but every night when I would take it my head was pounding, my house was moving, quickly and vertically. Then, I had a lot of nausea and it would last until the next day until 1:30 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. then it would wear off.”

Admittedly, the Franklin University graduate shares that the biggest issues he still deals with is the anxiety and withdrawal from Depikote. And, there are also issues he has yet to deal with concerning family members.

“Depikote left me leveled all the time, said Greenwood. “And, now that I’m off of it and my issues are about the past, many family members have dismissed his concerns.”

Nonetheless, Greenwood has made progress.

He attributes part of his progress to the untimely passing of his 79-year-old father who died of a massive heart-attack six years ago. Greenwood says that his verbally abusive dad was also an enabler of sorts. Nonetheless, he was able to muster the courage and conviction to deliver a moving eulogy at the funeral and comfort his mother who was married to his father for 55 years.



Indeed, he has made progress.

Today, he has relocated back to Marysville where he places flower petals at his father’s grave out of respect. Greenwood realizes that his return means that he will have to revisit some of the triggers in his past, but he is determined more now than ever to address and close this chapter in his life.

“After my father died, I felt relief; I have experienced the most growth in this last six and a half years and the most stability than I’ve probably ever had in my life,” said Greenwood.”

“It might sound bad, but it’s been a blessing; I don’t have dreams or anxieties.”

He also says that he forgives those in his family, but recognizes the need to not have to be around them.

Now the 48-year-old Greenwood is using journaling to cope with his thoughts. Finding relaxation in classical music and his unconditional cat – he is on his way to a better man.

“I really appreciate the support through the years,” said Greenwood. “Every day is a new experience and more growth – it’s not over with because I still feeling anxiety and panic only because I really never was weak; I just didn’t recognize my strength.”

He hopes that sharing his story will inspire others to address the root issues to their mental health issues and learn to cope and move beyond their perceived limitations.

“I just want to see more success with other people,” said Greenwood.

The self proclaimed people lover is now happily working at a local Columbus hospital as a Customer Service Coordinator. In contrast, he has now become what the crisis hotline has been for him – a sounding board and support for many of his fellow employees. And, it’s in this capacity that he believes that has brought him full circle and initiated growth on the mental, spiritual and social levels.

“I’ve come this far and I’m going to find my way to work through this struggle, said Greenwood. “This weakness or struggle will become my strength, and now it has.”

“You can recover.”