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A Promise of Hope for Bipolar Disorder

by *Autum Stringam*

They said there was no cure for bipolar affective disorder. True “manic depressives” like me would always be medicated to manage the firecracker highs of mania and the deep black lows of depression. In 1993, there were stacks of pill bottles on my fridge. Over the years I tried thirteen in total. Uppers, downers, anti-psychotics, anti-depressants all labeled with my name.

They said there was no other way, and I believed them. After all, my grandfather died of a self-inflicted prescription drug overdose, and my mother of deliberate carbon monoxide poisoning. Suicide was a tradition in my family.

Thank heaven my Dad didn't believe them. With God's help and his steely determination to save me, he found the answer. Who would have guessed that the answer lay in a farmer's pigpen?

Life with my bipolar mother started in rural southern Alberta. I was the second baby, born only 11 months after my sister, Angela. Over 16 years, my Mom gave birth to 9 kids and adopted a daughter who needed a family. That's the kind of woman she was—she loved family, and she was kind to strangers.

She was good, but she was still sick. Mom's symptoms, masked with excuses that frequent pregnancies made her moody, slipped through her doctor's bipolar radar. Her father's suicide was disguised by a family too ashamed to admit mental illness; his wife, daughters, and sons all called it a heart attack.

So when I got sick at the age of 13 no one in my family admitted the truth. I was an embarrassment and a failure. My grades dropped,

moods escalated, and by grade 12 I was swinging deeply into bipolar episodes. At 18, I was manic and married to Dana, who, at 22, was kind and unsuspecting. We had dated for only 6 months and just saw each other on weekends.

It didn't take long for Dana to discover that I was very sick, but he stayed by me. My symptoms worsened when I got pregnant. After James was born, I became just like my mother—repentant sobs between explosive rages and delusions. My doctor started me on a mixture of medications to flatten the highs and lift the lows of my illness.

Meanwhile, my Mom finally got a proper diagnosis and started medication. However, she refused to talk about it—still silent and ashamed of her inheritance of imbalance. In 1994, she killed herself.

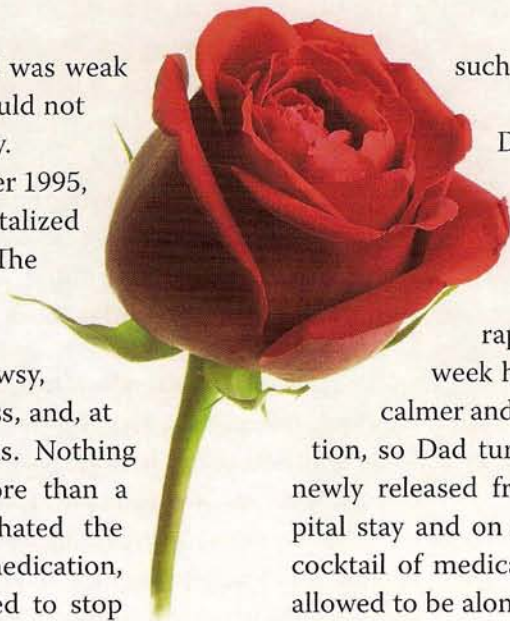
On the saddest day of my life I was too medicated to feel the pain, but my Dad was lucid and his heart was broken. Seven children still lived at home. Soon my brother Joe was diagnosed with bipolar disorder also. Two generations of suicide and a sibling diagnosis made my prognosis clear. My doctors said I would never be free of the medications and I must not have another child as long as I was medicated. All my dreams of a full family and a good life died with my Mom. She was strong and it

still killed her. I was weak and I knew I could not fight this destiny.

In September 1995, I was hospitalized for a month. The new drug combinations made me drowsy, agitated, helpless, and, at times, rebellious. Nothing worked for more than a few weeks. I hated the side-effects of medication, but when I tried to stop taking the pills for more than a few days my symptoms turned psychotic. In a manic rage I hit my small son, and when Dana hauled me off to the hospital, I tried to throw myself from our car onto the freeway.

Then, a miracle happened. My Dad met David Hardy, a biology teacher turned pig-feed formulator. David listened to my dad's tale of illness that gripped Grandpa, Mom, and now me and my brother, and said, "That behavior sounds like a pig with ear-and-tail-biting syndrome." It might have been an odd comparison, but it led to a fantastic discovery.

David described his recipe for a nutritional supplement combination including nearly forty natural vitamins, minerals, and amino acids in very specific ratios. The supplement seemed to work to calm pigs, whose digestive symptoms are similar to humans. Since no traditional treatment was working for us, my Dad felt we had nothing to lose by trying



such an approach.

David and my Dad created a supplement combination for my brother to try.

He responded rapidly—within a week he was clearer and calmer and off of his medication,

so Dad turned to me. I was newly released from another hospital stay and on a heavy five-drug cocktail of medications. I was not allowed to be alone, day or night, so when Dana worked a midnight shift he turned to my Dad to keep me safe. After finding me in a tantrum, rummaging Dad's kitchen for knives, my Dad took charge and forced me to take David Hardy's supplement several times a day. Within a week I was showering and caring for myself and calmer than I had been in years.

By the end of the second month of supplementation I was completely off of all of my medications and more stable than ever before. 1996 became a year of healing as I first recognized, then tried to undo the damage I'd caused during the times I was ill and out of control. My clear head and calm drug-free mind was a miracle. And now there was work to do.

I began a search to find the elusive state of "normal." I had habits to break and skills to learn. Because of the pig pills discovery I was no longer living in a foggy head or floating in a chemical soup. With a healthier body and a clear mind I made progress using methods that



Come hear Autumn Stringam talk about *Hope for Bipolar Disorder Recovery* at the Chicago Health Freedom Expo.

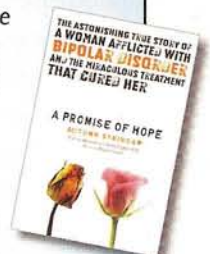
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Autumn Stringam has been married 16 years to her husband, Dana, have four children, and, together, they

share a passion for assisting the mentally ill.

In 2007, Harper-Collins published Autumn's story called *A Promise of Hope – The Astonishing True Story of a Woman Afflicted With Bipolar Disorder and the Miraculous Treatment That Cured Her*. The book was released into Canada and Autumn and Dana traveled across the continent with their four healthy children, speaking and raising awareness of hope for mental health recovery. **To purchase a copy of *A Promise of Hope*, visit www.nutritionalresources.com.**



For help or information about EMPowerplus or Truehope support programs, please visit www.truehope.com. For Autumn's speaking schedule, writing samples or information about the Promise of Hope Tour, visit www.autumnstringam.com

— Continued on page 39

A Promise of Hope for Bipolar Disorder by *Autum Stringam*

(continued from page 13)

had never worked for me before. Counseling helped because I could listen and remember. Books and classes became effective because I could read and learn.

Three and a half years into my recovery, I was thrilled to discover that I was pregnant. Dana and I celebrated the final restoration of every good thing that we thought we had lost to the illness. But, faced with another baby—a daughter, I knew I had some other kinds of healing to do. I finally began the journey inside. I started writing my story. In the pages of my life I saw the transformation of a life and the redefinition of mental illness.

It has been twelve years since my Dad and David Hardy discov-

ered the supplement they now call EMPowerplus. Sold through a Canadian company Truehope Nutritional Support and produced in the United States, EMPowerplus has led to the recovery of thousands of people like me with diagnoses ranging from bipolar to depression to anxiety and ADD. In spite of the interest of excellent university researchers, several published studies and ongoing double blind studies, as well as the claims of over ten thousand North Americans who have benefited by the use of the supplement, virulent bureaucratic opposition has been raised in Canada to try to force EMPowerplus users back to standard drug therapies. It is the fight for the right to choose a non-drug

treatment that has formed my new life's path and my public life. In 2003, in a press conference on Canada's Parliament Hill, I claimed that mine was the new face of mental illness. Not an illustrious claim, but a hopeful one. It is my hope that as the story is told and as others enjoy the benefits of my father's very personal miracle, there will be a new face for mental illness, that the stigma of degradation and embarrassment will turn to one of acceptance, and that others will know what I know—that a diagnosis of bipolar is not a death sentence, nor is it a life sentence. There are answers, there is healing, and everyone who suffers has a right to know about and choose the treatments that work for them. **HK**

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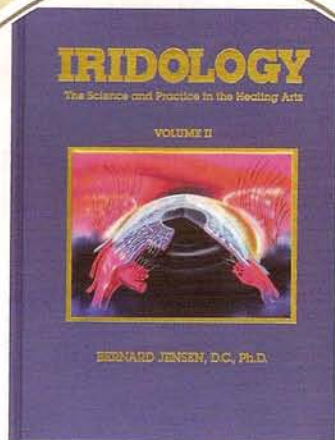
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