

A Message to Teenagers:

Whatever you are going through is valid. So many times people underestimate their problems or are afraid because the stigma against mental illness makes them feel weak. I hope you know that nothing makes you stronger than the fact that you are fighting to stay alive every single day. I wish that when depression first struck me, someone had told me that everything that I was going through was real. For so long, I kept things in my head and I felt like it was driving me insane.

I came forward about my emotions and struggles because I was tired of feeling so lost and helpless. People won't always understand what you're going through, but if they love you, they will try to help to the best of their abilities. Even the people who love you will sometimes not know the right thing to say because they don't know how. During those times, it is important to remember that you always have yourself.

There are so many times that I hated myself and my mind for making me feel the way I do, but I learned that you have to work with your mind instead of against it. You are still you. Your struggles, whether it be depression or anything else, will never be able to define you. My depression is not who I am. But I'm not ashamed of it either. I don't think mental illness makes me weak in the slightest, and anyone who comes forward with their mental illness is nothing but strong in my eyes.

If you are going through something similar, you are strong in an unimaginable way because I can tell you that my depression has tested my resilience more times than I can remember. But as long as I'm alive and fighting for happiness, I'm winning.

If there was any advice I could give someone with depression, it would be to seek help. Telling my parents that I needed a therapist was one of the best decisions that I have ever made. I needed someone to talk to that not only validated my problems, but also was able to help me decipher my darkest moments. Now is not the time to be afraid of speaking up. You know what you're going through.

I remember having trouble knowing if I had depression, but if I had just trusted myself to know when something in my life was wrong, then I would've spent less time in a bad state of mind. It's an uphill battle and you're going to have to be braver than you've ever been before. Hope is not lost. Nothing stays the same and you will not always feel the way that you do. That idea keeps me moving forward and because of it, I feel better than I ever believed I could've a year ago.

I have bad days and worse days, but some days I wake up and everything in the world feels right. Stay strong my friends; you are even when you feel like you are certainly not. Happiness is in all of our futures. That's something worth living for.

Love Always,

A Friend