

Moving from Depression to Joy and Confidence

Loyda Navarro

I thought I could be healthy by going to see my doctor regularly. But then I lost my job. I started to feel down. I did not have the energy to do my daily tasks. I started to lose focus and my worries escalated to a point that even simple things of life that make me feel joy, suddenly disappeared.

I went to see my doctor and I explained my situation. She told me that I was depressed. "Depression!" I thought to myself. "How could that be? I am a healthy person, hard working, and always on the go. And now I am mentally ill?" I felt scared and alone. There were times that I isolated myself and did not want to talk to anybody, not even my family. I lost interest in things. Going outside was a challenge. I remember there was a time that my sister had to come and get me out of the house. The worst thing was not knowing where to go for help. My depression got worse. I felt powerless.

A friend of mine told me about Project Hope and I enrolled in the GED class. This was a big step for me. I was scared. When I went to register for class, I thought I was going to have a panic attack, but the lady at the front desk greeted me with a smile. The other members of the staff welcomed me as if they had known me for a long time. They treated me as if I had something to offer to them.



Another was to see a therapist. I was skeptical about talking to a therapist because my culture thinks that people who get counseling are crazy. I visited the therapist anyway. I had to do what was best for my health. I am glad I did. My therapist told me that it was very important for me to tell my family so I could get their support.

I found out that I was not alone. Other people are suffering and dealing with the same thing. This process has not been easy. At the beginning, I felt ashamed of being depressed. Today it does not bother me at all.

The program at Project Hope focuses on education, but the staff pays attention to physical and emotional health as well. The classes have helped me to take care of my body, mind, and spirit. They showed me how to take action about my depression. I also learned about resources available for people with this illness and how to obtain them. I learned about incorporating nutritious food, exercise, walking, and doing inexpensive things that can keep me healthy both physically and mentally. I learned yoga, meditating, gardening, and taking time for myself to relax.

Project Hope has helped me to overcome many obstacles. With support, I have transformed my life. I feel more joy and confidence. I walk with a positive attitude toward life.

Loyda Navarro served on the editorial board of this issue of The Change Agent. She is still a proud student at Project Hope. She believes that to be healthy, we should remember the words of the teacher Elsa Gindler, who said, "Our well-being depends on the well-being of our neighbors and the world in which we live."

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This made me feel good about the program.

I had an appointment with a counselor, and she discussed different ways of dealing with my depression. One idea was to take medica-