

Single, But Not Alone Anymore

Jennifer Englehardt's story as told to Mark Winterbottom

"As a single parent in my 30's, I want to make people of my generation aware of a wonderful organization, which has helped me immensely. Only recently, since discovering Recovery, Inc., has my life become meaningful, which allows me to anticipate a hopeful future. Previously my life had mainly consisted of a never-ending battle just to



maintain my sanity. Also, I hope to introduce the Recovery training program

into the school systems so my kids and their generation will be able to avoid the misery that I have experienced in my life.

"As a child, I grew up in a family consisting of my father, mother, an older brother, and a younger sister. Our family moved around the country quite a few times. When I was 7 years old, my mother committed suicide. Later on when I was a young teenager, dad remarried, and then the family moved to Europe. While I was living in Europe my mental health deteriorated to the point that I needed to be hospitalized several times. Returning to the United States, I was able to complete high school; however, as a young adult, my life became chaotic with episodes of deep frustration and disappointment leading to disillusionment and an acute sense of insecurity.

"Although I attempted to complete college several times, I was unable to stay long enough to graduate. I drifted from one unrewarding job to another; never staying long enough with any one to establish a career. Hoping to find some stability and

security, I married twice. Both marriages ended in divorce leaving me alone with two children to raise. Throughout this long period beginning in adolescence, when I was first hospitalized, until just a couple of years ago, I have had a long struggle to maintain any semblance of good mental health.

"As a child, beginning with the tragic death of my mom, I always had a troubling sense of alienation and isolation. It was difficult for me to make friends. I displayed the typical teenage rebellion, but my disruptive behavior was more intense and prolonged. My life consisted of a campaign of emotional battles with my parents and the outside world. The ways that I used to fight these battles were weapons of belligerency. When asked or told to do things that upset me, I would go on the offense by creating an intense, emotional confrontation of accusations and disrespect.

"At times, when I felt that I was losing a major battle, I would retreat by running away from home. Unable to find sympathetic friends to comfort me during these battles, I turned to promiscuity. In between these episodes of emotional upheaval, I would sometimes experience brief periods of unexplained euphoria, which put even more strain on my emotional system rather than comforting me.

"When the family was relocated in Europe, I found out that I could no longer continue to function using the emotional tactics that I had been using previously. The underlying fear and anger of the past became so frequent, and so very intense that panic and emotional paralysis set in, forcing me to be hospitalized. Until just a couple of years ago, my life consisted of going from one emotional breakdown to another.

"Periodically my emotions would be so out of control that I would totally panic and

crash into an emotional wall of fear, anger, and depression. My thinking became so irrational, so disoriented, that suicide seemed to be the only option to find peace of mind. Finally, after going through a number of suicide attempts, I acquired some emotional stability through subsequent hospitalizations, therapy and effective medication. I was stable enough to realize and accept the fact that I, like millions of other people, am a nervous person. This acceptance enabled me to see that I needed to actively work at acquiring and maintaining good mental health. I realized that I needed to practice good mental health to be able to raise my two girls. Then I discovered Recovery, Inc.

“I have discovered that my thoughts were actions of uncontrollable behaviors. By golly, it is called a SYMPTOM! My psychiatrist gave me a label. Gee, I am a NERVOUS PERSON! Supportive people could relate to my thoughts, feelings and actions. Wow, there are MEETINGS. Amazingly, there are TOOLS and a four-step example to follow. It is a miracle. Coping skills and practice can make a difference in my life and others. I continue to survive and look for a better tomorrow. I opened my closet and released myself from the bondage of stigma.

“The Recovery mental health self-help group helps me to take charge of my emotions rather than being controlled by fear, anger, or depression. By attending weekly meetings, I have learned to accept myself and to accept the idea that I can rid myself of

the harmful thinking and attitudes that had caused me so much pain in the past.

“People of all ages can benefit from Recovery because it provides a firm structural foundation that is most forgiving when mistakes are made. Another thing about the method is that it talks directly to you and then teaches you to talk self-assuredly to yourself. When I first joined my Recovery group, I learned that millions of other people have the same harmful thinking and attitudes that cause people to bring so much agony into their lives. Through the Recovery training, I am now able to tell myself that I have a choice -- I don't have to always be fearful. I don't have to be continually angry. I don't have to suffer debilitating bouts of depression.

“Recovery, Inc. is not a miraculous cure for mental health problems. Life most certainly can and will be stressful at times. I can still get fearful, angry or feel empty but now I have the means --the Recovery tools -- to change those distressing feelings. Using my Recovery training, I am now able to recognize that these feelings are merely the result of insecure thinking and attitudes.

“I have learned how to change my thinking from harmful, threatening feelings to secure thoughts. The Recovery mental health support group certainly has changed my life for the better. Now I am able to experience the joy of raising my two girls, and receive the love and friendship of my family and friends.”