

An undergraduate student writes about getting help to manage and overcome depression:

I have suffered with depression for a while now. I suspended my first year, my placement and my final year due to severe bouts of depression, and am very grateful that Bath University has been understanding and helpful, as well as Student Finance England in supporting my studies financially.

I take an anti-depressant, have had Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, go for counselling at Uni, and attend Alcoholics Anonymous. I call Samaritans from time to time as well, and I have found all of these so helpful when I feel bad.

My depression takes the form of suicidal ideation, extreme fatigue, low motivation, seeing no point in pursuing my dreams, and often forgetting what I like to do. The bed feels like a pit from which I have no energy to lift myself out of. And I don't even have the energy to fulfil the death wishes I get.

Two years ago the company I worked at on placement had large changes in management -- my whole department was made redundant -- and it proved too difficult to keep up with. I broke up with my significant other, quit my placement, and dropped out of University. I felt like a useless burden on everyone, and that I was doing them a favour by leaving.

The shame of failure crushed me. I placed my education so highly and felt as if I had let down everyone that worked to support me. I regularly thought of suicide, and settled on a method and date to follow through with it. I sought alcohol to provide me with temporary relief from these thoughts. I started therapy in a vain attempt to appease my mother's worries, and the state of my mental health prompted my therapist to inform the Community Mental Health Team. Something different happened this time in therapy -- I was honest about everything. I said "I am thinking about killing myself".

They suggested I go on anti-depressants. When I first went on anti-depressants I experienced a lift in motivation, but the lift in mood came about a month later, and in that gap, I regularly had panic attacks and nearly took my own life. I was sent to Accident and Emergency and waited to be seen for 6 hours only to be told nobody could help me. I did feel safer there, however, and I encourage anyone that is struck with a panic attack and suicidal feelings to get to A&E or somewhere safe where people can watch you.

One month into taking my anti-depressant, I felt so much better. I felt like the old me again. I felt I could make positive gains in my life proportional to the

effort I put in. I have a broader spectrum of emotions now. I don't always feel this way -- sometimes I am struck with that same fatigue, but it is brief. It is important for me to exercise, get out in the sun, have a social hobby -- something where I am talking to people informally, and to go for therapy/counselling, and have a big breakfast before I take my anti-depressant -- food increases the bioavailability of the drug by nearly 45%!

If I were to pass on one thing, it would be "Ask for help". It's okay to ask for help. I can't do this alone. Talking about my struggles with others helps take the shame away from it.

I appreciate life more now due to what I have experienced, and I use my experience to help others having similar feelings to those I have felt. I am grateful to the help I have received. I keep on plodding on with my degree, and I have a set of strategies I can employ to keep my mood in check. And I learn new things every day. Today I have hope, meaning and purpose in my life.