

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) You're listening to the bipolar now podcast, episode 19.
- Speaker 2: [00:06](#) Welcome to bipolar now, the weekly podcast for doing life on your terms, not the illness. And now here's the host of your show, Mike Lardi.
- Speaker 1: [00:19](#) Well, hey there. Welcome back to another episode. Today's a little different for me. I'm in a, I'm in my secret, uh, alternate studio location today. They were doing tree take down and removal in the neighborhood and, uh, working on the telephone poles. And then some guys across the street started building a driveway. And I just said to myself, you know what, I don't want all that noise. And so I'm in my secret location. Daniel could not be with me today. So, our summer schedules just haven't lined up. Um, his vacations, my breaks... things haven't worked out for us to get together so far this summer. So I just got to roll with it. And, you know, not having him here, I, I do feel kind of alone. I actually, I just appreciate having the dialogue. I love that a podcast allows me to have discussion and guests and things like that.
- Speaker 1: [01:17](#) And, today, um, I do feel alone and, it's gonna be kind of a heart to heart with you today and maybe that's appropriate, given today's topics. So, over on the bipolar now podcast group over on Facebook, we get questions all the time and requests for shows and that's what today is. And today I'm actually going to spend some time with you talking about a kind of an invisible word and that is stigma. It's um, it's a word that has a lot of feeling, built into it. The word stigma actually comes from the Greek and it's, in this instance it's, it's a mark that they would've given like a physical, mark. It's a mark of disgrace, kind of similar to having like a, a mark or a flaw physically. Um, and so it's today we know it is something or someone with a negative association, like in the military, stigma has to do with misconduct or failure.
- Speaker 1: [02:17](#) But I feel like that also plays out in a just ordinary culture. I mean, what is that feeling you get when you see or hear the word homeless? And can't you kind of feel that, like it's different, right? There's, there's something about it. It's, it's a mark of disgrace. What happens to you when I say the word, um, prison. Do you maybe think about going there and what it would be like or if you've been to prison, um, have you experienced that people treat you differently and you feel like that's a mark that you're going to carry with you for the rest of your life? Um, just having spent some time in prison. Um, there's associations with the word divorce isn't there? It seems like a, you know, a failed relationship is a mark that takes a long time to recover from. Um, and some people never recover from that mark.

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

- Speaker 1: [03:11](#) Um, I know this one personally. Um, I know the stigma of dropout. Um, I have dropped out of college twice. Um, maybe, maybe three times if you count the credential program that I was a part of, um, when I was learning to become an educator. Um, but I have a, you know, I have that, that is a label in my life, a stigma. I am a dropout. I know what it feels like to have to tap the Mat. And life became overpowering and I couldn't continue my studies or focus. And so I left school numerous times. Um, there's stigma associated with all kinds of, of things in life. Uh, what happens when I say the word Druggie? I mean d do you picture that as you drive around town? Um, do you have in mind like what, what that looks like maybe in your family?
- Speaker 1: [04:05](#) Um, is drug abuse, uh, something that you have to deal with on an ongoing basis and all the drama that surrounds that. These are the kinds of things that have stigma. So when I approach mental health, um, specifically mental illness and in our situation bipolar disorder, there is sort of an invisible label attached to us. Um, mental illness causes us to experience stigmas in life. And so many of you have reached out to me cause I did a little background research for this episode and I wanted to make sure I was telling the right stories and getting the right information and just coming to grips with how it feels for all of you. And so many of you shared stories with me about the way things were going in your work life. Um, maybe in the job situation, how you had to be secretive or unable to be open about your specific, um, disorder and how that impacts the work life.
- Speaker 1: [05:04](#) And maybe you've been passed up for promotions or special things that you do, um, to, you know, as, as a part of training the next generation of people in, in the workforce and you get passed up for these things. And a lot of you shared that with me about how it's hard in the workplace because there's really, there's really no room not to be perfect. And I find it interesting that that kind of bleeds over into family life. And so many of you shared with me, you know, sort of the eggshells that you have to walk on around the home and with your, you know, significant other or with your mom and dad or, or, or you know, you just, you've done things that you hated that your kids have had to see you act out in, in, in ways that are less than ideal.
- Speaker 1: [05:45](#) And they come from a place of mental illness. And so it feels out of control. Like, like you didn't have a choice. Um, but here you are and you're, you're in a family that doesn't get you. And so a lot you shared a, at least sentiments with me and social, there's all kinds of things that happen. There's rejections that happen socially. There's friendships that are broken. There's bonds that are severed. Um, personally in your personal life. It can feel like, you know, I, I don't, I don't understand myself. I don't know why

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

I keep doing these things. I don't get the patterns. I don't feel worthy of success and I don't feel worthy of reward and I don't feel worthy of good things in life because of the things that I've done. And I just want you to know that I have stories in each of those situations that I can completely relate.

- Speaker 1: [06:38](#) Because in work life, I know what it feels like to be put on the outside. I had a very public, um, I had a very public manifestation of mental illness, um, at my last major job that I had, which was being an artist for a church. Um, I had a manic episode and a series of, of manic disruptions. Um, really play out in a public way. And we've talked about that on the first several episodes of this show. Just giving the background for the show and where I come from and what I had to go through. And now I've had to pick up the pieces from that, but I know what it's like to see the looks on people's faces when you think you're being completely in the right and you're acting and complete mental illness. And I just, I know how that feels to, to walk around and have doors shut on you and have like people's hearts closed off to you and you treated with, um, you know, a sense of like, I, Mike is dangerous and Mike needs to just go away.
- Speaker 1: [07:37](#) Um, I know that in the, in the work life, um, and, and I will, you know, I will thankfully tell a better story because I've been able to go back and patch things up and I'll teach you in a little bit about how I do that as far as building bridges go. But you know, for awhile there it was completely broken and severed and I had to live in isolation. Um, in my family life I had to operate with secrecy. Um, there was, there was a period of time leading up to our next family gathering and the only thing on my mind that entire time was how am I going to keep this a secret? How am I going to keep this from being known? And I remember when I was standing in my grandparents house and my aunts were coming in the door and they were bringing food over and it was kind of just, you know, the usual get together, was starting to take shape.
- Speaker 1: [08:29](#) And there I was an actually took one of my aunts, uh, off into a side room and she works in, um, health care. So she understands mental health. So I thought I had some pretty good chances, uh, with my aunt. And I said, you know what, I actually, I, I've had to become diagnosed bipolar. And I explained to her like what that had played out like in my life so far. And you know, these are people that I only see several a year. So my mental illness, you know, wasn't quite obvious to them except that maybe I had skipped out on an Easter gathering or maybe I wasn't quite up to coming over for Superbowl Sunday. Um, or, or what have you with, there were really no other like public displays of mental illness in my family. So for me to admit to this

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

and to say, Hey, I'm, I'm trying to figure it out, I really don't know what it means.

Speaker 1: [09:19](#)

I just know that I don't like it and that it's a big part of my life. And um, and man too, to be able to have to say that and come out of secrecy was one of, like was one of the major chapters in my recovery, um, was my family life. And now, you know, I have incredible support and, um, I lived to tell a better story than my family. You know, you've heard episode seven where I was on there with my sister. It's like when we meet, when we get together these few times a year, I want to be able to tell the right stories. And so that kind of motivates me, you know, to keep breaking the patterns in my life and to keep replacing them with better things so they don't keep running into the same problems over and over again. But, you know, family life, it was a secret for a long time.

Speaker 1: [10:01](#)

And, and still to this day, it's Kinda like, okay, that's, you know, that's kind of over and done with, right? Like, Mike, you're all good now, right? Like, everything's okay now. Right? And it's just kinda something we don't talk about. And so, you know, I take it upon myself to, uh, introduce, you know, stories that are new and I take it upon myself to let people know that, hey, you know, I don't, I don't always have it so put together. And quite recently, this is something that I've gone through. And so I'll share a story or two and I just want to, I want to make sure people know that it's not a, you know, set it and forget it, you know, once and done with and now everything's okay. And it's all, all the bad stuff has gone right. All the bad stuff is gone.

Speaker 1: [10:40](#)

You'll never do that again. And, um, you and I know that that's just not true because tomorrow, Tomorrow's mental health is not guaranteed to anyone no matter how strong we appear today. So I'm, I've had to deal with that and family life with the secrecy. Um, in my social life I've had flat out rejection. I have flat out had people who say, don't call me anymore. I don't want to hang out. And that's heartbreaking, especially from somebody who, uh, enjoys being liked. You know, I enjoy that. I have a reputation for being liked, but there's certain individuals who just couldn't handle what they saw and what they heard and the stories that came out of my own disability. And no matter how hard I have tried to go and build a bridge, I've recognized that it just isn't meant to be built and I have to let people go.

Speaker 1: [11:41](#)

Um, when there's flat out rejection, I mean it's not my fault is not my fault that somebody doesn't want me in their life. And so I have to move on from that, but it's not, that's a stigma. And then of course there are personal marks, you know, that, that we received, that we take upon ourselves, that we internalize,

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

uh, mentally we, we take on these, the stigma of failure, you know, of suspicion, which for me, you know, is the opposite of what I enjoy, which I n instead of failure, I enjoy achievement and I like pride myself on the fact that I get things done and I'm easy to work with and I'm enjoyable and that I'm a big ideas kind of guy. And I, I enjoy like working out of a place of achievement. And for me, achievement is something that drives me forward.

Speaker 1: [12:35](#) Um, but failure is one of those things that I am constantly dodging on account of my mental health. Um, I am, I am like a step or two ahead of failure at all times. And I know that's, that's probably something that everybody can relate to. Um, but I just, I, I literally feel it. I say, Oh, I got, oh my gosh, if I do that, if I give in to that, if I think that I'm gonna fall into failure and it's the opposite of achievement. And then with suspicion, failure, failure and suspicion or kind of these two things that I'm always dodging. Um, because when I was mentally ill, I, I could literally feel people's suspicion as they were interacting with me and as they were like, considering whether or not they need to hold me at arms length. And, you know, being a suspicious person is the opposite to me of having confidence in myself, confidence in my value, confidence in my abilities, confidence in my personality.

Speaker 1: [13:34](#) You know, like I felt stigmatized according to the suspicion, um, that I was internalizing from other people and they didn't even have to verbalize it. You know, it's just, you pick up so many cues, right? You pick up so many cues from the way people are watching you though from the wed, from their body language, from whether or not they want to, you know, see you again, make you know, make the next step with you. Like that's takes a massive toll on my confidence. And so, you know, in a reaction to that I've had to replace suspicious thinking, suspicious speech, suspicious activity. I've had to replace it with, you know, confidence and like people can trust that I'm healthy, that I'm here, that I'm doing good work like that I'm present in my family. You know, going back to the secrecy and family, like I needed to have confidence that I could operate within my family from a place of value that includes my mental illness and it's not like these things have to be separate from me.

Speaker 1: [14:37](#) It's like I carry this around. It's part of my life. It's part of the way my brain is uniquely wired and I bring all of this into work, life into family life, into my social settings. And now I to personally internalize it as Mike is a healthy man and he does healthy things and that helps me become a massive action taker. You know, I brought this up on my Facebook live not too long ago because somebody asked me like, how do you get proactive? I would really like to know like how do you stay in motion? How do you keep yourself doing the right things? Like what is it,

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

what, what allows you to do that? And for me it's just coming from an identity of being like I am, I have a proclivity to be a massive action taker in reaction, you know, as a replacement for the patterns that take me away from action that take me away from health, that take me away from confidence, that put me back into a place of secrecy and suspicion and failure.

Speaker 1: [15:39](#)

And it's like if I don't see myself as a massive action taker and I don't literally every day push against the things that are difficult that I don't really want to do, but I have to do them in order to move forward. Like that comes from a place of identity and that identity is secure because at end he says, you know what, maybe I don't like it, but I can put one step in front of the other and I can do this. I'm a massive action taker and that's what I become known for. And I love that, that, that, that plays out in my personal life. That plays out in my work life. And that helps me break the, uh, it helps me break the power of stigma, which of course is something with a negative connotation. And we're talking about mental health. So the way we conduct ourselves or the public failures that we go through, like that's all feeding into this stigma that surrounds bipolar disorder.

Speaker 1: [16:35](#)

And I'm saying, I've learned to be a massive action taker and that has not cured me, but it's helped me over the hump and it's helped me become a power player in my own life. You know, I had this interesting discussion, a conversation. I had a nice sit down. It was coffee with a friend and she's this phenomenal woman. She's had this incredible life, incredible career. You know, she's been in charge of things. She understands physical health, you know, she understands how the body works. Um, we know each other through my gym. And um, she is just a phenomenal person, a phenomenal personality. She's full of positivity. She's just brimming all the time. And so we have these great discussions and when I used to work at the gym, her and I could talk for an hour and it was like, you know, so fast how it would go by.

Speaker 1: [17:28](#)

Well, she had heard that I was having a difficult time since around the 4th of July and that I was struggling, you know, with mental health. And um, she, so she had heard this from people that, that I go to the gym with and I'm sharing my story with and she's like, you know, okay, I want to see what's going on in Mike's life, which is amazing, right? Like these are the kinds of people you want to have around you. Like, what's going on in Mike's? I want to know how can I help? How can I help provide some perspective or maybe just, you know, some sort of an encouragement or a boost. And so that's who she is to me. And we were sitting down and I was sharing with her, you know, the struggle that I was having and you know, I'm having a very, um, I'm having a very apparent struggle with finances right now.

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

- Speaker 1: [18:11](#) My income is very spotty and you know, since since I, uh, you know, stopped doing construction, uh, which this whole year, the constraint, the jobs have been spotty. So my paychecks had been spotty so I barely been able to make it here and there. I'm like, I'm just struggling financially and um, that job ended and we're about to shut down that business and I'm about to launch a new one. Um, but in the, in between I've been taking random jobs and I had a few things lined up that I thought were going to come through and they didn't come through. And so I'm left going, oh my gosh, I'm super short this month. And that, that has always been for me. Finances have always, like if I'm having a difficult time and finances, I automatically associate it with a personal failure. And that's just the achiever in me.
- Speaker 1: [19:00](#) And I know that's not everybody, but I personally panic when things are not financially sound and I'm not having regular income. And like right now I don't even have a job per se. I'm doing lots of small jobs to make ends meet, but I'm still falling short. And so I'm having to rely on family and friends and it's just, I was relaying this struggle to this woman, this friend of mine, and she, oh my gosh, bless her, right? She's like, Michael, I want you to erase that word out of your vocabulary. You do not struggle. And I can't, I can't keep myself together when I hear, when I hear something like that, because it's like I, I, I don't, we'll it away. I don't wave a magic wand over my brain and say, brain stopped struggling. Um, and she's like, no, but it comes from our brain.
- Speaker 1: [19:57](#) And struggle is an invention and it's an illusion. And we have to, we have to release it. And I'm like, I'm keeping my mouth shut and keeping my mind open. Right? Like I want to receive the message that she's trying to convey to me, which is do not struggle and be, you know, be beyond struggle. You, you aren't, the struggle is not your identity. Mike. Struggle is not your identity. Overcoming is your identity and I'm trying to receive it and it's not working and, but I'm smiling anyways cause I appreciate the genuine like care and love that this word is coming from. So I appreciate that. Um, but to, to to say don't struggle to somebody who has a mental disability that is almost anchored, you know, around the, the constant, um, stressors of life that that creates struggle. Like to tell somebody who has a mental illness don't struggle.
- Speaker 1: [20:57](#) Um, that's just something that I'll never do to you. I will not tell you not to struggle. And so as I'm receiving this, I'm trying to receive the heart behind it. Like what I'm trying to hear from her is release the struggle and except the abundance. And so she comes from this, you know, this teaching, this mindset where abundance is all around us. We just have to grab it. And if we struggle, if we heard, if we're miserable, like we just have to, we

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

have to get beyond it and ascend and um, without any real practical steps of how to do that. Um, I don't, I would never tell somebody, you know, in my shoes with a brain disorder like you have to ascend, um, without actually giving them steps of, of how that's done. So you know what I'm, what I'm getting at today is if you have a mental illness and there is a stigma in your life attached to that and it's attached to struggle, I'm telling you that it's just a label.

Speaker 1: [21:59](#)

And what she was trying to get me to realize is that we need to live beyond the label, live beyond the label. And with mental illness there's always going to be a label, but we always have to actively start peeling that label off when it starts to stick too much. Like everywhere I go all the time, I'm constantly thinking about my mental health. And it's because I have a mental illness that jeopardizes that mental health that puts it at risk. And what I have to do is say, all right, I cannot associate myself with my mental illness. To the point of that I'm living in it constantly and I'm, and I'm trying to like always trying to, you know, elude my mental illness. No, I have to live beyond this label. I do. She's right. I do have to go above the struggle. I do have to reframe my struggle and I have to get beyond it because labels are like this.

Speaker 1: [22:59](#)

When you first start out with, with bipolar disorder, when the diagnosis first hits your ears and the doctor says it's bipolar, it defines you, right? That's the first thing that happens is mental illness defines you. It's all about the mental illness. It's all about what it's caused. It's everything that it's destroyed. It's everything that it's stolen from you, it defines you, and then you get to a place where you've lived through it a few times. You start to, you know, acquire some skills and abilities. You replace habits. So you stop running into patterns. And struggle. It still happens. You know you have these big blow ups or maybe you have an episode that just goes on and on and on and on. And so the illness is, is hasn't really defines you. It's just part of you. But now it's limiting you. So it goes from defining you to limiting you and then you have to come to a place where you have a breakthrough.

Speaker 1: [24:04](#)

So for me, my breakthrough was saying I'm not going to keep this thing a secret. Remember my family scenario? I was in the private bedroom with my aunt explaining to her that I didn't want to keep this a secret anymore, but I, I didn't know who else to tell except her. Like there is a breakthrough moment that is going to happen for you if it hasn't happened already. And when you own the illness, which is why I call you guys owners, I want you to start to like insert yourself in the thinking of an owner that I don't, I am not bipolar. Mike is not bipolar. I own a bipolar disorder. It doesn't have me. I own it. And when you have that

EPIISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

breakthrough, it comes with breaking the secrecy. And it comes with breaking the stigma, which is why today's show is so incredibly important.

Speaker 1: [24:58](#)

It opens your world. When you have this breakthrough, you gain through experience and practice, you gain the wisdom of secrecy. And what I mean by that is you start to know who to tell, who is trustworthy, who is worthy of this secret? And for me, it started with my aunt. You know, of course my parents, my sister, they knew, they knew everything. They were the ones picking me up from the hospital every single time I got admitted. But beyond that, I started to learn the wisdom of secrecy. And this was incredible because, you know, in the workplace it allows me to do things differently. You got to ask yourself, what am I gonna do now? What am I going to do differently? You know, in the workplace, in the family, in my private world. And what I would say is you've got to work to build a bridge.

Speaker 1: [26:01](#)

And the wisdom of secrecy allows you to build a bridge with one person at a time. And you'll learn you're not going to get this perfect. I have a confided in people who are not worthy of the secret. You know, I've, I've worked for people who are not worthy of the secret, but by and large people are agreeable and they want to know because you're here, you're coming from a place of, I'm building a bridge that's a totally different energy level than secrecy. You know? Now I don't even have like what you would consider secrecy. The wisdom of my secrecy is I'm trying to perceive who to build a bridge with, so take it the workplace for example. Okay, you got a manager, you let you work for maybe you work directly for the owner of the company or the business. You need to discuss the fact that you have an actual commitment to your mental health.

Speaker 1: [26:59](#)

You know, you listen to this show, you hear my voice, I talk about all these things and I'm getting you to commit to greater mental health, not perfect mental health. That's an illusion. Get rid of this notion of perfect is like me never having an episode again and therefore I'm going to do great at work, are gonna do great in the family, are going to feel great about myself. Like that's not, that's not even close to reality. You're going to have issues. It's a mental illness, but if you are actually committed to your mental health, you're committed to taking the steps to grow and develop. You need to discuss that with your manager and you need to build a bridge. Really come from that mentality. Come from that heart, build a bridge, discuss, you know, say, Hey, what are, what are the legal things that I need to know about?

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

- Speaker 1: [27:50](#) What are reasonable accommodations that happen? You know, that I'm you don't want to say entitled to, but you want to say, what can, what can I expect if I have like need of reasonable accommodations and that manager is going to know or they're going to find out from HR, but you want to be on exceedingly good terms with the manager or the owner of your business. And then here's the thing, people don't like to hear, but you have to prove yourself so you're not going to do it perfectly. You're going to have to take a day off here and there. You're going to feel more overwhelmed. You're gonna feel overwhelmed 10 times more easily than the person next to you doing the same job. If that's how it's set up at work, it's going to be more overwhelming for you. It's just how this illness works.
- Speaker 1: [28:42](#) We're sensitive, we're overloaded very easily. If things change on us, we're very rigid and, and I say that not to disparage you, but I'm just saying he know that about yourself. When something changes and for me like working at the restaurant, something tiny would change. Like the way we make a drink and I'm like, oh my gosh now, now I have to remake. I have to make all these drinks a completely different way and like that was very stressful for me. Whereas the guy next to me, he's like, okay, what's the recipe? And he just do it like that. That's what we have to know about ourselves. It's hard. You have to prove yourself and the thing is your manager or the owner, they want you to prove yourself that's healthy. They want you to feel like you're bringing value to the environment. They want you to feel like you're a team player.
- Speaker 1: [29:30](#) They want you to feel like they have your back and you have theirs. We're working together. You know a lot of this language in in corporate world is like team and I don't know if that's like shifted in recent years, if that's over done and they call it something else now, but team team is everything. You want to be on the team, so prove yourself and it's a very good feeling and that means when you hit that instance of needing to take a day off for mental health, you're not going to feel guilty about it. Isn't that awesome? You're not going to feel guilty about it. You've already proven yourself. This is just a blip on the radar and you're going to be okay. You're going to come back, you're going to do this. You know, in the family it's all about building a bridge to that one supporter who gets you.
- Speaker 1: [30:16](#) They don't know everything about your illness. Maybe they know nothing about mental health, but they get you. They want you to succeed. They are in your corner. That's the person that you want to educate. And you know what I say? Educate yourselves together. Pick up a book. There's so many amazing books that explain bipolar disorder and there are books that are written for the family. Like I personally always recommend take

EPIISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

charge of bipolar disorder by Julie Fast and John Preston. It's a phenomenal book. You will learn so much with your family. It actually breaks out like separate paragraphs saying, hey, if you're a spouse, if you're a family member, if your brother or sister, this is what your loved one is going through and these are the things you can do to be the most helpful to them. Isn't that awesome? Take charge of bipolar disorder. Such a good book.

Speaker 1: [31:06](#)

Educate yourselves together. And here's the thing. Some people are never going to get you. And those people might be your mom and dad, which is terrible. And I, I cannot imagine going through life without the undying support and the unconditional love of my mom and dad. But some of you, I know this, you've told me your family, the closest kin, they're like, when are you going to get it together? We just want you to be better when you're going to get it together. And here's the thing, this isn't a neat, this is not an easy word, but you've got to let go. You've got to let go of fear of feeling like you need that support because in reality, somebody else who is family or might as well be good as family, like how Daniel is to me, how Phillip and Austin, how they are to me, like somebody in your family is going to want to be there for you.

Speaker 1: [32:01](#)

So you gotta let go of those who pretend to be family, but they just want you to get your act together. So that's family. You've got to build a bridge. Think about building a bridge to yourself. Okay, this is the last piece. Build a bridge to yourself that that sounds like a bridge that goes nowhere, right? That's false because you have a version of yourself somewhere in your psyche, somewhere in your spirit, somewhere in your heart is a version of you that you want to be and you have to build a bridge to that person. So one of the ways that I love to do this, when I was first starting out, I was collecting different guys that I looked up to at various points in my life and they were just great standards for me of certain characteristics of a man. And they all did different things.

Speaker 1: [32:51](#)

Some of them were artists, some of them were business leaders, some of them were pastors, you know, some of them were speakers and authors and, and entrepreneurs. And I put, I assembled this group of men together and I said, these men live beyond labels. Okay, true. None of them have a mental illness like I do, but these men live beyond labels and I want to be like that. So I would literally put them together in a file on my computer and every week, once a week I would look at their faces and I would look at the little descriptions of who they are that I wrote all these things down. Like this is who they are, this is how they live beyond the label. I would read all those things in every week. I would become a little bit more like them in my actions, in my decision making, in my thinking.

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

- Speaker 1: [33:40](#) And in my heart I started to construct an identity of who I wanted to be. And this is so incredibly helpful when you have a mental illness because it all gets jumbled up, like it gets way exaggerated and then they destroyed, right? With bipolar disorder, your identity is so hyperinflated and mania and it is so deconstructed and dismantled and stomped upon on the ground. When you're in depression, when you have anxiety and worrying, it's just suffocating. Like it's just so hard to have a solid, stable identity. And so what I'm telling you to do is build a bridge to yourself by looking at people who live beyond labels. And then be like them, use them to help you break the patterns. You know, I kind of go back to that word struggle and my friend and I, we were talking about it and I was saying, I know I need to get beyond it, but I'm living in the middle of it right now and it's tearing me apart and I'm trying hard to do all of my usual, you know, arsenal of tricks that I throw at stress and worry and situations that are bad.
- Speaker 1: [34:45](#) I'm throwing everything at that and there they are just barely keeping it at bay, you know, because otherwise I know myself when I've gotten into this situation before, I've had complete and utter meltdown. And so that's not happening. You know My, my struggle is present though. But here's the thing I want you to hear is if you're not a massive action taker, remember that's how we, we break stigma. If you're not a massive action, take care of, you're going to take action when it's too late. So for me in the work situation, I was going to school and I was an artist on staff at a church. Things were getting bad month by month was going by. I was losing my sanity and I was taking action too late till I had to tap out, drop out of school or get fired. It was too late.
- Speaker 1: [35:39](#) Taking action too late, letting struggle persist too long. Like that cost me seven years of my life. I'm telling you now today that I'm standing instability. I'm in a stable place, even in the midst of enormous emotional and financial and just situational pressure and standing in the midst of that and their struggle, but I'm taking action. I am literally committing to the things that I need to do over the next several months. They're gonna put me where I want to be from there and forward go, no moving on, but it costs me seven years of recovery trying to get to this point because I didn't stop and break the patterns. Remember, we have to always be breaking the pattern by replacing it. Replacement. They, they teach you this in recoveries of all kinds. You know, addiction, alcohol, things like that. Um, you've got to replace the patterns, otherwise you're going to keep running into them.
- Speaker 1: [36:45](#) So break the patterns, break the struggle. It's not going to happen overnight. I already like feel the difference this week of

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

just having talked it out. You know, that coffee we had was great last night. I had a meeting with my psychiatrist and it went for two and a half hours and it was just phenomenal. And we talked about all of these things and you just, you gotta, you gotta stay with it. You gotta, you gotta remember this and I'll close right here. Have dignity. It's the only way you're going to live beyond the label. Have dignity in all things. So earlier you said, we said we need to build a bridge. That's a dignified act in the workplace. You can have dignity in the family, you can have dignity with yourself. You can operate from a place of dignity, have dignity in all things, and you will live beyond the label.

Speaker 1: [37:40](#)

Dignity just means, okay, it, it, it's a, it's a, it's a worth. Dignity is an inherent worth. It's operating from a place of inherent worth not brokenness. And somebody from a background like mine of faith in God would say that you have so much worth that you cannot be replaced. Your worth is beyond calculation. You could add up all the bank accounts of all the billionaires in the world and put that before God and then put you before him and he would choose you in a heartbeat. Like that's how much worth you have. So when you operate from a place of worth, you're acting in a dignified way. And remember this is, this goes back into the secrecy that I was talking about, having wisdom about who to share with. You know when you're, when you're talking to your manager or the owner of your company, do it with dignity. As you build that bridge, operate from a place of dignity. When you're building bridges to family, you're doing so in a dignified way. You have super worth to them and you also have to have super worth, super high worth in your own estimation. When you see yourself. I'll close with this. I wrote this down because I didn't want to say this the wrong way, but you and I as owners of this, this disorder, we are a special class of people who have to Labor to fit in everywhere we go.

Speaker 3: [39:10](#)

But yeah,

Speaker 1: [39:12](#)

if you can do it in a dignified way, it will cease to feel like labor. So let me, let me put that in my own words. When you're coming from a place of dignity, it won't feel like work to try to be the person at work that people enjoy working with. It won't feel like work to sit down with family at gatherings and not feel like you have to get up, get up and leave the room every five minutes. Like when you come from a place of dignity, you will love yourself in a way that brings you so much satisfaction and joy. And you will continue to build an identity based on dignity that says, I'm beyond this label. I am not my mental illness. I am so much more. It is a joke. So I want you to know that when you lean into dignity and this takes practice and we're going to get good at this.

EPISODE 19: LIVING AS DIGNIFIED

- Speaker 1: [40:10](#) Listen, if you stick with me on this, we are going to get good at this. We're going to operate from a place of dignity because we're special class of people, but we are going to fit in in a special way. I cannot articulate in words what it feels like to be loved by people knowing that you have a mental illness and is so beyond words to be even articulate what that feels like. But it doesn't feel like work to me as I move in and out of the different, you know, social settings in my life, work life, family life. You know, as I spend time just quiet and like with, with, with my own thoughts, you know, and not having my own thoughts run me over. It doesn't feel like labor. Even in the midst of struggle, which I'm clearly in right now, it doesn't feel like labor. I have dignity. So hopefully these things can help you, you know, become an action taker. Hopefully these things can help you construct an identity. Hopefully these things can help you live beyond the label and break the stigma in your own life. So there's so much that could be said here, but I think you get the point and I know you're going to see a day where the power of stigma is broken in your own life. And that's what I want for you. Okay?
- Speaker 2: [41:38](#) Okay.
- Speaker 1: [41:43](#) So maybe you caught this, but a lot of what I've described as breaking the stigma, um, a lot of that involves talking. Either we're talking to ourselves or we're talking to others, and that's why I'm including a resource for you. It's a lifer discussion guide. But trust me, if you don't have a good lifer, you can easily do these by yourself. These are the specific questions that will open you up to changing out your labels. And you'll find this powerful activity at mikelardi.com/19 and these are perfect for journaling, but I especially want to encourage you to share them out loud and to do that with someone who loves you. So that's it, MikeLardi.com/19 okay, that's gonna do it for this week, but we are so not done with this topic, especially with how it affects you. So make sure you come on over and join us at the bipolar now podcast group, and that's your tribe of good old label shakers and they're over on Facebook. So head on over there. Next week we get going on something that's a real pain for those of us who take medications and that is the subject of weight gain. Now my buddy Daniel Pryde is on the show and we're going to talk all about how to break a food addiction so you don't want to miss it. So I'll see you back here at the same time, same place. Adios.
- Speaker 2: [43:13](#) [inaudible]. Thanks for listening to the bipolar now podcast at [www dot mike lardi dot com](http://www.dotmikelardi.com).