

Episode_7_Amy.mp3

[00:00:02] Please be advised we will be discussing subjects that may not be suitable for all audiences and will include subjects that some will find challenging traumatic or triggering.

[00:00:15] Welcome to you don't fight alone. A podcast sharing the stories of those of us successfully living with mental illness and how we got I think there were probably many rock bands along the way.

[00:00:33] I'm just I'm really lucky that nothing really bad happened to me. I remember you know passing out on the subway going home in Brooklyn and waking up like way down in South Brooklyn at 3:00 in the morning. Just you know like wandering around on the streets looking for a cab.

[00:00:53] Yeah I have to say there were a lot of a lot of incidents like you know a lot that I could hide too.

[00:01:04] So it wasn't like I was just being self-destructive I was just like making bad choices.

[00:01:17] So my name is Amy and my diagnosis from the past was generalized anxiety disorder Well I'm from a very communicative family and my mom is retired.

[00:01:37] Both my parents are retired but she was a copywriter. Her whole life and just like a lover of the arts and music theater that kind of thing as was my dad who made his living as a civil engineer. So he was definitely more mathematical more. You know he was duped into doing a lot of like home projects. Do it yourself kind of things. He had like a workshop in the house. So it was it was a very it was a really beautiful environment to grow up in because I feel like we got exposure to a lot of important cultural things and you know my folks were always reading and just always like really engaged in the world and just really I think because they're both New Yorkers they have born and raised in New York City and then they had us outside of D.C. in the suburbs.

[00:02:29] But I think they just have a really nice sense of like they've just grown up around like all kinds of people and just like very beautifully like open minded and treated everybody the same. I could have a conversation with anyone so I said I would like to say that like they worked hard to give us a really good and comfortable life and we weren't spoiled but we also weren't really like denied things that we wanted. So one example I think is cute is I wanted to take drum lessons so my parents agreed to help me pay for it but then I had to like mow lawns to pay for the majority of the lessons.

[00:03:10] So I always felt like they were supportive but we had to work. And my sister was more involved with like dance and you know she could sing and she did theater so. So they were very encouraging with that.

[00:03:23] I was really I do I think that my mom experiences a lot of anxiety so I think maybe it's something genetic. I will say I don't think it was environmental. There was a little bit of moving around but there was nothing there was nothing traumatic that would have set off a chain of events. I just think we're sort of wired that way. I can't remember if it was in high school or college or college or grad school. OK it was around college age. I think I first went to it wasn't my first time in therapy but it was my first time seeing it on paper. You know I think she called it like mild adjustment disorder or something and it was the first time I was medicated for anxiety so that was I think I was around 21 22. I think it's kind of relieving to to see a title for this thing that you're feeling or that has been a presence in your life on and off for a while.

[00:04:39] I had a moment and it's work related. I was at my job at a tattoo shop in the Lower East Side in New York City and someone came in for some very delicate thing in a very difficult spot to tattoo. And he's kind of start. You know I wasn't feeling great. This is in that period where I was going through a heavy breakup I wasn't feeling good about myself like I was dealing with a lot of feelings of guilt and shame that were just consuming so. And then this guy the customer started kind of giving me this attitude of like you know oh are you sure you can do it. Like are you you know. Are you comfortable are you sure.

[00:05:24] Just sort of doubting me and questioning me. And at this point I've been practicing my craft for seven or eight years.

[00:05:31] You know I'm I think pretty skilled at what I do but I was not feeling good about myself. It just set me off. I just kind of started to like break. And just like shake and you know all the physical stuff just get like sweaty and nervous. So I told myself to suck it up. I'm a professional and I started to do it. And midway through the tattoo I just like I couldn't it just like wasn't going you know it wasn't going well and I I ended up. I was very supported by my bosses and other friends at the shop and my friend Kristi stepped in and finish this has you for me. They told my boss told me to go outside take some deep breaths of course. Oh he's coming back to the breathing as a big tool for dealing with anxiety and many things. But.

[00:06:29] I think I mean I have to say like for me it was at that moment and you know it got to me. It was like.

[00:06:40] This has so I think at that time in my life I was dealing with it in a healthy way but actually so I'm 38 years old now.

[00:07:03] So you know yeah we're talking about that feels like ancient history at this point. And then fast forward to you know eight years after that. I'm around 30 I moved to New York City. It's very like overstimulating and adult with a lot of the a lot of the uncomfortable feelings of moving to a new place and trying to get established again and trying to reconnect with people. I definitely took a more avoidant path at that point. I was drinking really heavily and it definitely it creates what I see as like sort of a false sense of connecting with people. But it you know it passes the time you're you're meeting people you kind of feel like you're feeling good.

[00:07:50] But then it started started to come started to come to a head a few years later and I was going through a pretty pretty major breakup with a partner of over 10 years.

[00:08:04] So then it was for the first like the anxiety was coming back so it's kind of like been this thing that like felt OK and then I felt less OK.

[00:08:18] But then in my early 30s going through this breakup it started to actually become more debilitating in terms of not only like having an anxious mind and excessive worry and feeling like this dialogue that keeps or you know in your head that just sounds like you know these people don't like you or not you know you don't know what you're doing you're not good enough you're a terrible person like all that stuff was going on internally and externally I was starting to just I mean I it started to manifest itself in like shaking like I was you know had like this kind of a low grade tremor all the time that I could tell was you know it was coming from my.

[00:09:05] My mind Yeah I mean at that point I realized I couldn't avoid that but up until then I had been leaning pretty heavily on escape mechanisms I would say to to not deal with it.

[00:09:27] But when it started to be a physical thing and maybe you know it could have been tied into like I'm a pretty sensitive person and maybe like alcohol withdrawals or whatever but it became a problem and started to affect my work. And I think I think at that point when it's affecting your work for me I was like Oh this is actually a problem. Like before that you know my friendships were intact. Like you you know my relationship was falling apart but other things seemed fine. But then once work got affected it was like this has to change.

[00:10:19] And then in my early 30s it started to become very dominating. So. Eventually I started you know I got a prescription for started having panic attacks. So then you know I thought I got a prescription from my doctor and I got back in therapy and eventually started doing meditation again started doing yoga.

[00:10:49] All the physical stuff. So it. Started to. It was getting better but it almost became like this other full time job.

[00:11:02] The Wellness kind of thing and it it's frustrating because it feels like you're doing all these things but yet the anxiety is still there. And then even like rushing around to you know make it to my therapy. Oh and I seeing acupuncture for the fear the panic attacks. I was like Oh my God I have to get to this appointment and that and I'm leaving New York City's that you have to catch the subway and everything's expensive. And then I have to work extra hours to pay for it you know of course I'm an independent contractor so.

[00:11:34] Anyway so it became like this I mean I don't want this sort of obsession but just I was aware that it was the focus of my life.

[00:11:48] So I got back into therapy and found another meditation group and just I like to think of it as like every person kind of has different tools that are going to be helpful for them at different times in their life and minor like very similar. It's like you know exercise community meaningful work.

[00:12:12] Community service you know things like that that get you out of your own head.

[00:12:24] I'm admittedly a very spiritual person and I think that there are there are forces that can really that really sort of hold us hold us back and keep us from reaching our full potential whether it's as artists as you know.

[00:12:50] I don't know. Whatever.

[00:12:53] For me anxiety just kind of puts me in a kind of a fear state where I'm operating from a place of fear. So I don't want to take as many risks. I don't want to you know even coming on a podcast and talking about myself is very racist.

[00:13:12] And there is a part of me that that wanted to bail you know and like.

[00:13:16] But then I realized no like I don't want to operate out of fear I think it's a big part of the struggle with things ideas.

[00:13:32] It really puts you in this place where you are. You feel so isolated and it's like what's wrong with me like you know for example like I would go work at let's say a big tattoo event and feel like I wasn't good enough to be there. I'm not good enough to be there. I'm not. And it's like I'm telling myself this over and over and. Things shift when you realize you know everyone in this room is dealing with their own either social anxiety you know maybe depression issues maybe there

are other things going on in their life that are hard. So it's like I really just you know come back to that meditation of you know may I be at ease but may all beings be eddies because I think. I think once you can pull yourself out of that kind of self.

[00:14:27] Facing you know a conversation with yourself it just allows you to just connect better with people you're more present. I mean you know we've all had conversations where you're just like in your own head the whole time you're not even really absorbing what other people are saying. So I think that's what I mean by getting pulled into like a lower version of yourself.

[00:14:54] You know kind of realizing you're not at your best I am a full believer in like whatever the tools are that work for you personally.

[00:15:11] I didn't really like it. Just kind of gave me that like Spacey slightly more apathetic than than I like to feel kind of thing but I really think everyone's brain chemistry is different and I know it's helped so many people that I care about so.

[00:15:31] I'm also not opposed to talking to doctors.

[00:15:33] I mean I really feel like you kind of need to have like your team like your wellness team and whatever that looks like whether it's you know a primary care doctor that you really like and you know really trust. You know it's interesting like women. A lot of us go to O'Bagy y ends from our team. So we're like used to talking to doctors regularly. A lot of men in my life are sort of resistant to this idea.

[00:15:59] Hey you know what I mean when you're used to having someone like poking around down there like talking about your brain chemistry just like No.

[00:16:08] Oh so if you if you're going to your doctor and they prescribe meds or they want you to. It's hard. I mean my insurance sucks you know I'm sure a lot of people's does and sometimes you have to prioritize paying for this kind of thing.

[00:16:34] I think I think I'm doing it as an exercise.

[00:16:38] A lot of the time because right now music is my big creative outlet. I think because I draw so much for a living that's sitting down to draw and pain is not it. It's it's hard for me to get to that really like intuitive creative space because for me it kind of just feels like work. At this point it's sort of that creative dilemma. So then I have this other medium which is just playing music that's like very freeing and really nice. So at this point sitting down to paint feels a little more.

[00:17:11] It does feel more like an exercise that I'm doing. So we'll see what happens with that but I'm also doing photography again and that's really nice. I still play the drums yeah play drums and I play the keyboard and ukulele.

[00:17:31] It's actually really nice because you know all my friends I played guitar and everything could always just like sit down and play guitar for 10 minutes. But for me to like play the drums I'd have to go to a practice space and do all these things are where you can play on a practice pad which isn't nearly as fulfilling.

[00:17:48] So it's been really nice being in a house working you my drum set just like you know it's been a really nice I think but it's tied in with this issue of you know what makes me feel at ease and what makes me feel like myself.

[00:18:06] And you know I know when I was in some of these school situations and even in some of these tattoo world situations where I felt really really small and really unimportant and really bad about myself like I can just go back to like playing the drums there.

[00:18:24] You know I don't know. For me that's like I used to think like being a painter was sort of like my true my true self for just like oh I'm a painter but I talk to you for a living.

[00:18:41] But now I'm just like No I'm just here. But I enjoy playing the drums and I always have and I think I always will.

[00:18:51] Even when I can't see and can't see you anymore.

[00:19:11] If there's one thing that I really want people to connect with is this idea that there are tools that are out there and you know really fine find these things try them like not everything's going to work for everyone but connecting two communities is really important. So wherever you find that sometimes you have to make that community.

[00:19:34] But there are so many ways to connect with people through your interests. Sounds so corny but it's true. I'm lucky that where I work is its own community so I'm constantly surrounded by that and I don't take it for granted.

[00:19:49] But there's that and I think just you know do you take care of yourself.

[00:19:55] And it's it's really baselines. Flake Drinkwater sleeve play don't over you know don't overdo the things that you know cause cause harm or exacerbate your issues like we all know what they are. So it's like everyday you make choices and I'm not saying that I'm so righteous and I always do the right thing or anything like that but it's you know I'm really proud of myself because I cut down no one cup of coffee.

[00:20:26] You know it was it was.

[00:20:28] It's a whole transition like you know one year I cut out sugar and then you know whatever. Not from my whole life just from my coffee. Let me be clear.

[00:20:47] I have a really great therapists and she helps me reword some of the things that I tell myself. So instead of like I'm obsessive about cleaning cause I have some phobias about insects or whatever. She's no Amy you're you're meticulous about cleaning and how does it make you feel when you clean your house and it feels good. So she's like you know honor that. So to honor the things that make you feel really good in your heart and don't find a way to like turn it around like it's a bad thing. And that's what I mean talking about like sort of the smaller self is like I can tell myself you know I'm obsessive I'm neurotic you know that was like a huge one from my past because it's so it's really fun to be really self-deprecating right. Especially when we're having a hard time. But for me there's a line between being able to laugh at yourself and which is important.

[00:21:42] You've got to be able to laugh at yourself and then also just kind of telling yourself these negative things over and over. So yeah I.

[00:21:54] Yeah I would say I really you know hope that all people just kind of take the time to take the care and sometimes it's going to cost some money and like make yourself a priority rather than like buying that thing that will bring you very fleeting happiness.

[00:22:13] You know invest in your house like oh my gosh I sound so selfish. I've been through so

much garbage G you know stupid self stupid like self-loathing behavior. And it's like just be gentle with yourselves. And it doesn't mean like don't be joyful and don't dance like be silly and do all those things.

[00:22:45] But I think the times are really hard so I think we all just need to be a little a little softer a little more compassionate with each other and with ourselves

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