

## Episode\_11\_Nat.mp3

[00:00:01] 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.

[00:00:17] 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 here.

[00:00:33] My name is Nat. I was diagnosed with. Social anxiety and. The kind of depression that never goes away. And is always there and it is there's definitely ups and downs but. It is not leaving me anytime soon. My grandfather. About.

[00:01:02] A month or so after I turned 21. I. Again I don't remember the specifics of a terrible foggy memory in all aspects. Cool things spring. But I had gotten into a really bad fight with my mom and I drink a half a handle a blueberry vodka. Which is like frustrating because I really love blueberries.

[00:01:29] And I don't really Want blueberry vodka at this point. Oh and a bottle of red wine. So you know just hitting all those notes right. And I went to. The Ogden theater for a show and I lasted at that show for about. 20 minutes. Before it threw up on a girl next to me and then I got. Kicked into.

[00:01:54] The uh the little drunk tank that they like wrangle all the uh all the college girls into. And.

[00:02:03] I remember there being me and this one other girl just like profusely vomiting into a trash can in the main lobby of the Ogden. And at this point I My dream was like I'm going to work in music I'm going to work for music venues. So rather than like. Attend to the matter at hand which is like you're drinking a lot because you had a fight with your mom. I was like I'm ruining my future I'm ruining my reputation and I like even in that moment it was it was so much about what other people thought of me and it was not. At all about how I was feeling which was.

[00:02:43] Like shit. And then I. Somehow get foggy memory. This time alcohol induced foggy memory. Found my way to an E.R.. I think my friend. Made a coffin ambulance. Got me there. But I. I had alcohol poisoning very obviously and I remember being really cold and I was in a hospital bed and. They didn't have any rooms available so they just left me in the hallway.

[00:03:20] And I was like This is cool. This is the best mental health care I ever received in physical health care and so I'm laying in a hospital bed in the hallway of an E.R. somewhere. And it's funny because. My sister's a nurse and I also just like double whammy got in a fight with my sister that day. And so all the nurses and doctors that would walk by I would just yell. And I was like You're not even a real doctor you can't even get me a bedroom you think you're better than me because you're a doctor fuck you and. End to them. I'm like this really drunk out of control college girl and I'm really just like. I grew up in a really religious family so a lot of a lot of the the mechanisms for.

[00:04:25] Curing yourself is like just pray about it. Or maybe like try harder.

[00:04:29] So I know right.

[00:04:32] So I when I was 19 I moved to Denver and I had a terrible year of transitioning and like faltering and trying to be an adult and then I started seeing a therapist. I I have a really weird education background so I was homeschooled from kindergarten until eighth grade and then I went to school for 8th 9th and 10th grade then I dropped out of high school after like a really bad panic attack.

[00:05:03] And I lived at home for two more years and then when I turned 19 I was like I am again gonna hear.

[00:05:19] I grew up in a religious household. This is true. As homeschooled until eighth grade. I also have eleven siblings which is not a very normal thing I would say. Although the goal in life is not to be normal I think that's boring.

[00:05:37] But in that way.

[00:05:41] I blame my parents for not paying attention but I understand the reality of like.

[00:05:49] I don't think anyone should have 12 kids. I mean that feels like a shitty thing to say because I'm the seventh and so I'm like I'm not saying that I wish I wasn't born which sometimes I am saying that but I'm also not saying that I wish that my eighth or ninth 10th 11th and 12th siblings were born because that would be a horrible thing to say.

[00:06:12] But I do think that there is there is a limited amount of attention that one person and I would refer to my mom specifically because my dad was the money maker and he worked full time over full time 60 hours a week. I don't remember much of him being there but for my mom that's just like overwhelming. That's that's too much attention to give to.

[00:06:41] It's like it's hard enough to be a mother of one kid.

[00:06:54] This is not a family secret but it is something that my family does not talk about especially around children.

[00:07:01] But my granddad killed himself before I was born and I didn't I didn't learn about that till I was like 14 15.

[00:07:15] And I wish that I had known. I don't know.

[00:07:21] I don't know what the right age to tell someone something like that is though. I had a conversation with my older sister recently and I have I have a span of sisters that have a system that's twelve years older than me and a sister that is 14 years younger than me. So it's it's like it's crazy because we all grew up in the same family but we didn't. At the same time we all we grew up in different times in my parents lives. And I had this conversation with my older sister recently who is she's 36 now and she'd she'd just like two years ago I got diagnosed with adult ADHD and that was after. Like years of just her being like something's up something's up. I don't know. Something's up. I can't focus. I can't do anything. And. She's great. But she said about my granddad. She said that when she was a kid and she didn't specifically told me like when she found out because I remember being 14 or 15 when I found out. But when she was a kid someone had told her that our granddad killed himself because he was so sad and the sadness is the thing that killed him. When my sister was younger someone had told her that my granddad killed himself. No they didn't say he killed himself. He said.

[00:08:57] Grandpa Sal died because he was too sad. And the phrasing on that is really really awful. Because for her that meant. Don't be too sad. Or you will die.

[00:09:18] And so that was like don't experience your full range of emotions. Because it's dangerous. Yes. That really illustrates the. The way that my family and not just my immediate family like my extended family that's that's my dad's dad and. He also grew up the same way very very Catholic and very much like he had six siblings and my mom also has six siblings. And it's just it feels like history repeating itself. And unlike.

[00:09:59] I am happy to be 24 and alive at this point. Well my first year in Denver I.

[00:10:20] I I think like a lot of people I was under the impression that a change of location was going to mean like everything is solved like oh living at my parents house and being in this like really really confined mine space is what's making me depressed. I was like I'm just going to move to Denver and everything is gonna be awesome. And that was not the case. After that first year I think I don't remember specifically. I don't think there was a specific event that like triggered me being like I need to go see a therapist. It was just like a slow build that was like dear God I can't handle this. And my parents were always like.

[00:11:01] I mean I don't understand you could just try hard or like do you want to talk to a priest.

[00:11:06] And I was like No a priest is actually one of the last people I want to talk to right now because they're just going to give me more religious bullshit. So yeah.

[00:11:19] So I found a non religious affiliated therapist which was probably one of the best things that could have done.

[00:11:32] In the beginning I went to therapy once a week once a week every week and that lasted for about a year and then I got to a point where I was like governments paying for this so good for them. But I was like I have the time and when I think about it it's hilarious that I'm like I just want time for therapy like I'm so stressed on time for stupid. But yes I would go I would go weekly and then I would go biweekly then and then for a while I would skip like three four months at a time and those are obviously the the periods where I would kind of sink back into just like really really unhelpful thinking. And so in a way that in a way that medication doesn't medication doesn't talk to me. It just requires what is already in my head.

[00:12:26] Therapy is a way for me to to have someone say things to me that make sense. But I'm not willing to say them to myself. I've been I've been cycling through meds for the past honestly three years and I've been on. I've been on like seven eight different antidepressants and three or four different stimulants and it's all it's all about them. I'm not a doctor very easily but it's all about the balance of the three. The dopamine serotonin in your brain effort and I am lacking in all those. So it's uh it's a wild ride storm figured it out yet but I have a really really good psychiatrist and I'm lucky in that way because I think it takes people a long time to find someone that they can really like they can actually trust and I really trust him and he trust me too because if you're prescribing someone stimulants you gotta make sure they're not gonna to go off the rails with that especially if they have a family history of addiction. You can have a med that. I was on a really good medication for a while and then I stopped being able to enjoy sex and I was like Oh do do I want to come or do I want to die.

[00:13:52] Who knows. And the thing is if I can't come maybe I do want to die.

[00:14:00] So I like that was a cool six month period where I was like I am so like energized and happy and fulfilled. But there's one facet of my life that is not working and I don't think people give enough weight to that. They're just like get over it get over it you're not allowed to enjoy your sex life anymore.

[00:14:20] And I'm like well that's bull shit. So we're going to keep looking we're going to keep pushing for something that fuckin works. And also. A lot of antidepressants just make me more anxious. I think similar to a lot of people that just walk into a psychiatrist office and are like I have a diagnosis of depression. Please figure me out. I started off on a lot of SSRI eyes and then I transitioned to more s and our eyes which if I'm not mistaken is norepinephrine based. Do you guys know you guys scientists. I mean those I think they were helpful in a way that was like it felt like. They were doing some things which is they were doing some things they were rehab taking zero in in a in a cool way that was working a little bit. But I would I would have and I have learned to be very specific on this. And that's how we've gotten to a place where I think like fingers crossed I'm not trying to drink jinx it but I think I'm on a good amount of good cocktail right now and that's as of like two weeks ago. So it's very very new and I really don't know at this point. But things would happen like oh I would I would have the motivation to get out of bed. I'd do it. I do it and I just live through it. But I would just like to be super irritable and just like. Stomp my way through life. Not enjoying anything. So in that way they didn't work. It's not a full solution and I think a lot of people get frustrated after a certain time where they're like I'm not fixable so why are we even fucking trying. And then from there I started on my psychiatrist said that I was actually one of the first people that he and he's a pretty young guy he's in like his mid thirties or something so it's not like a old timey my psychiatrist is not an old timey doctor that gives me potions just for the record.

[00:16:36] I wish he was my psychiatrist as a younger guy but he's also very intelligent. I trust him a lot.

[00:16:44] So I was he told me I was one of the first people that he tried prescribing Stimulants to in his practice which ended up going really so well for me so well that my blood pressure spiked alarmingly and I now have. I'm not a person that takes very good care of my body. So having to take my blood pressure every day is a pain in the butt. But I do it so that I can continue to take meds that work. So yes I start off on a lot of SSRI eyes go to s and our eyes then we mixed in stimulants. And for a while it was I was on almost like three meds at a time. It would be like something for a stimulant something for an antidepressant something for anxiety. And by this point I've cut out the anxiety medication and I credit that to improve. I do want to say it's like the god of. It doesn't work unless you want it to work. Kind of thing. I don't know if that makes sense. But at this point I don't take anxiety meds anymore and I'm really thankful for that because it is another thing and another side effect that I would really rather not deal with.

[00:18:05] So I'm happy that I'm able to control that in my own way in my own life. But I'm on right now.

[00:18:14] A stimulant and also a antidepressant that very specifically targets um norepinephrine because it seemed like for a long time it was like a serotonin. It's a search tone and it's like following this wild goose chase and serotonin has an alibi so you can't pin it on him. But Norman effort in dopamine are still out there. They're still at large and.

[00:18:43] Need to get them I need them. When I started improv. Two years ago in 2017.

[00:19:10] That's when I decided to go by Nat and that. It's very significant. The transition between Natalie and Nat and I've had people tell me like why are you trying to force it. Why are you trying to go by Nat.

[00:19:27] And the reason is.

[00:19:30] It's not a rebranding because that sounds shallow but it marks a specific period of my life where I.

[00:19:43] Decided to define myself on my own terms.

[00:19:53] So we had a scene and it was about how your therapist is is not your friend. Like don't expect your therapist to be your friend because then they're not a good therapist if they're just padding your ego and telling you like you're doing great. Fire that person if that is your therapist and go find someone who's going to be a little harder on you. But what he said was I had a lie. My character had a line that was like you're my therapist but you're being really critical right now. And Sean goes I'm not your friend. I have been clear this whole time that I'm not supposed to be your friend. I am a mirror that you hold up to yourself because you're a faulty narrator of your own story. And he said that line and I'm on stage.

[00:20:41] I was just saying OK.

[00:20:46] God Ouch. Ouch that really hurt. OK.

[00:20:50] And then we just had to continue with the scene and that's in improv. That's the way we're like. I like to say I'm not a very good actor. I'm really not. I'm not a very good actor but there are moments in improv where you're like there is so much truth to that. Like I don't have to act. Scott. Act like a person which is also hard sometimes I think you're having a good time in therapy. If you're going and you're just getting like thumbs up you're great you're doing awesome. That one that either means you're at a very tender spot in your life and your therapist knows that. So they're there working with you in a way that only trained professionals can. Or maybe they're new. I don't know.

[00:21:39] I think people need to be really choosy with therapy because I was lucky that my first therapist is still my current therapist. Four years later and he's great. But when I was going through like I was going through some like insurance bullshit where I had to pick a new therapist and he was switching over to accepting Medicaid and all this stuff and I saw a therapist who is like an older lady who reminded me of my mom and I was like.

[00:22:11] I'm positive she was saying the same exact things that my current therapist is saying but she was saying them with the face of an old white lady who looked like my mom and I was like I can't.

[00:22:23] This is too this is too real for me.

[00:22:28] So yeah.

[00:22:30] And I just I've had people say to me like Oh I tried therapy once or twice. Like I just didn't like the person so I don't think it's for me. And I think that's. Stupid.

[00:22:49] I had someone say to me recently and it was around the time of one of my shows but he was like Oh isn't it funny how like Everyone's depressed.

[00:23:00] And I was like What is everyone.

[00:23:05] I think I think you're trying to relate to me right now. But what you're really doing is invalidating the illness that I do have.

[00:23:17] So yeah it's it's frustrating operating unlike a slower pace than everyone else it feels like sometimes and I that's something I've talked about in therapy a lot is being having a lot of. I don't know what the right word is probably shame having a lot of shame over the fact that like I never finished college and right now I'm at the point where I'm like who needs who needs college. I'm doing fine but there's still something in my brain that's like literally everyone else who's 24 has a degree.

[00:23:51] Not that I would even use it. I have a. Day to day the anxiety rise.

[00:24:12] Comes through in a really. A.

[00:24:18] Very like self-critical way. So it's it's hard to walk through the day with a voice in your head that's like you're not doing good enough. And that's definitely something people don't see when you're talking about.

[00:24:36] Like an invisible illness is like. You look so competent. Like I'm like do I got full and you and me.

[00:24:44] It's cool I'm killing it.

[00:24:49] And it's been even funnier being in kind of a in a public view where people are like TMI grows so confident. She's passionate. And I'm like Cool.

[00:25:00] Everyone's fooled.

[00:25:03] That's definitely the anxiety portion of the depression for me is interesting because I obviously no one's is the same. And mine is very singular to myself.

[00:25:18] But it just it shows up as a as a very low baseline of energy and a low baseline of motivation which is something that the meds have helped with extremely. But it's like I've been seeing the same psychiatrist for long enough that he's like how many hours did you sleep last night. And sometimes when you say to co-workers or friends you're like Oh man I slept for 16 hours last night.

[00:25:47] They're like wow that sounds great and restful. That sounds awesome. I wish I could do that. And I'm like. I think that's one of the things for it for me in terms of therapy is like it's really just someone saying things to you that you already know.

[00:26:26] This somewhere in your brain you know it and it's it's nice to have an outside person just say to you like Hey. One time my therapist goes to me I spent like half an hour complaining about my mom and he was like you know your mom's an asshole right.

[00:26:47] And I was like No she's a she's a great lady what do you mean.

[00:26:52] And I'd like to change my answer. That's my breakthrough moment when I realized my mom was an asshole.

[00:27:10] Being able to transition from like being very very sad to being very very angry has been interesting for me.

[00:27:20] Because I think there's more.

[00:27:22] Motivation behind the anger.

[00:27:25] And it's not in anger at my mother or my father or my family specifically but in a lot of ways it's an anger at the inability to talk about these kinds of things.

[00:27:42] And so I'm quite outspoken about it. I was having this conversation with a friend of mine the other day which is like for the past five years in therapy it's been a lot of just. Learning what specifically I've learned in my childhood that has been so unhelpful. Which is like an unwillingness to talk about your feelings. Passive aggressiveness. Not being assertive. Because there are. Because there are consequences to being assertive. And never physical consequences.

[00:28:25] My family was always just like stone walling emotionally. Like why are you making a big deal out of something that it's not a big deal. Get over it.

[00:28:37] And being able to transition from like learning about the reasons why and then and then transition to OK I know the reasons why I am the way that I am now I can I can move forward and. And take control of my own life in a way that I'm like. I have the tools and I have the background and I have not entirely not entire lack of judgment for myself but I I definitely. I definitely feel like I'm in a place at this point in my life where I am done with feeling the shame associated with that and I'm ready to.

[00:29:27] Take that and make it work for me. And the anger is a big part of that because the anger is a big motivator.

[00:29:35] For a person that has a depression that makes me unmotivated my anger motivates me. And again it's not anger at any specific person it's not. I don't think.

[00:29:50] In contrast to people that I know experienced mental illness and are not dealing well with their mental illness. I think that I don't I don't blame any one specific person. It's just. Just is what it is and it sucks and you got a. Move forward.

[00:30:12] There's nothing else you can do. I would not. Sugarcoat.

[00:30:32] It. I. I wouldn't say some bullshit like. Everything is going to be fine. Just think positive. Have you tried yoga. Maybe you should exercise. Those are all terrible things to say. I would say. What you're going through fucking sucks. And. I feel you. And. A lot of people are going to tell you. To reach out. To.

[00:31:13] People that you trust. And sometimes you don't have anyone that you do trust because reach out to someone. Like your parents. And they will tell you those same things

and they will tell you that you should try harder. And at that point. It might. Feel like you are all alone. But. Please. Don't. Kill yourself. That is my official advice. I have to give myself deadlines or I won't do things. So. I will do stand up by the end of 2019.

[00:31:55] And now that is on record.

[00:32:03] For more information and to donate please visit [Youdontfightalone.org](http://Youdontfightalone.org).

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