

Episode_15_Kait.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.

[00:00:16] 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.

[00:00:36] So it was a. I even know the exact dates it was on November 6th of 2017. And aid drunken suicide attempt. I was trying to start facing all the things that had happened.

[00:00:51] To me. Found that those coping mechanisms that I had learned and that intense about patients. Were not really that helpful. Or what I was trying to do. I was also working at a job actually in a mental health clinic as an administrative assistant. That was. Very triggering.

[00:01:13] It was a really difficult job and it was it was a really stressful job two months. And from talking to other people who worked there at the time including therapists and psychiatrist that I'm friends with. Which is weird as a mentally ill person. Yeah I was I was working in this place that was super triggering. I started drinking more and more. And. I just didn't have any real outside support. And then. As I mentioned I had I. Kind of out of the blue contact from an abusive ex. Who. Instead of me who had changed his name to somewhat completely changed his name first and last. And so I I got this Facebook message from some random guy asked who it was and instead of telling me he sent a picture of his face with this like really stoic serious. Expression. And I. Wept and I just spiraled and ended up quitting my job and spending all day and night drinking instead. Which culminated in a suicide attempt. So I actually. Ended up calling Nine one one myself.

[00:02:42] My boyfriend at the time was at work. And. Police came and got me and took me to the hospital. So I spent. Four or five days in the hospital at that point and then actually went back a week later. And spent another. Six. There. At that point. So that was like the month of being in the hospital. And. A couple weeks after I got out of the hospital I actually went into residential treatment. For. Only a few weeks. But putting this all on my insurance issues and.

[00:03:20] That lovely stuff. It was a lot more. Helpful than I am the first time and actually that was number four and five. Yeah there are a couple more back. In between there actually one was earlier in 2017. And. It was a lot more helpful. I was admitted to a newer hospital that had a.

[00:03:51] Different approach. It wasn't just. Sit in your room and go to group therapy. For. You know an hour for the day and then that's all you do. It was actually like very structured and immersive and read it like art therapy and music therapy and. Even in therapy dogs come in which was.

[00:04:12] Pretty awesome. So those those at least helped stabilize me and I actually made some friends but I still have. Now. My name is Kate and my diagnoses are complex PTSD. Major depressive disorder and I'm currently in recovery from alcohol use.

[00:04:51] I was first diagnosed with depression at 13 and technically complex PTSD is not a diagnosis yet it's not in any of the in the DSM but I was diagnosed with PTSD about two

years ago. So officially I have PTSD. No complex because it doesn't exist. The DSM is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders complex generally refers to long term usually childhood abuse. Things like that but it really applies to anything that's more than a single event and it manifests differently. Like with it it's kind of like halfway between borderline personality disorder and classic PTSD. So like I have difficulty with figuring out my identity. A lot of relationship issues. But that's more isolation rather than the. The rocky relationships that happened with borderline and I've I've really had it suggested that I had some trauma for. Ever since I've been in therapy at 14 but I always resisted it until about. Two or three years ago when I finally decided I wanted to accept that it wasn't just depression and there might be something else going on. I was in therapy at the time. And my therapist asked. I asked me to go into an intensive outpatient program and basically do learn some coping skills to be able to handle trauma therapy before I really started digging into this stuff that was in my past.

[00:07:00] It's kind of like vague and difficult to describe childhood trauma. My mom has borderline personality disorder and. So she would switch from I love you you're perfect. You're the most wonderful thing in the world to I hate you I wish you were never born. I also had a. Moderate amount of physical abuse as a child and teenager coming from my mom and my older brother and. Then I had a couple of abusive relationships a little bit later on as an adult as well.

[00:07:41] I tried therapy but the thing with sharing a therapist with your abusive mother doesn't work so well. So. Yeah. So I tried therapy for a few sessions did not go back for several years after that and really just stuck with meds for a while. I was hospitalized for a period of time. In high school but again like I didn't really stick with anything after that aside from meds.

[00:08:24] My therapist told me to start looking into residential treatment programs at that time despite the fact that I was drinking heavily enough to earn myself an alcohol use disorder diagnosis. No one was really that concerned about my drinking at the time because it was so tied in with the trauma and the therapy that it was getting passed by the trauma stuff was a bigger concern. So I actually ended up finding a finding a residential treatment facility in Tennessee that focused on trauma and mental health rather than just substance use which was. Harder than you would think. Actually most of them are primarily aimed at substance abuse. I have a lot of trouble with relationships. I don't trust anyone. Like just flat out I don't even my current partner who I live with I don't trust fully. Just realize he's probably thinking that those but he knows that. So I like I just I flat out don't.

[00:09:53] Don't trust. Anyone I have. A I can't build relationships beyond surface level. I have a really difficult time being vulnerable and.

[00:10:11] Just being able to have those those real. Connected human relationships seems like kind of a fairy tale to me but I would love it if it's possible for that to happen. I also still have pretty bad depressive episodes. So getting getting those under better control though they're a lot better than they used to be. Getting those under control would also be very nice. I would like that. I know that it's caused by not being able to trust my family and I've never really been in a relationship or my early relationships I was completely betrayed by my partners so opening myself up to that again is.

[00:10:56] Next to impossible.

[00:11:00] So like I know the right answer. I know the like cause and effect but I can't really say why I can't just be like hey I'm going to be vulnerable right now and I'm going to actually trust you.

[00:11:19] There's still that little voice in my head that says that everything is my fault. Always 100 percent of the time and I don't like it when people prove that to me.

[00:11:33] Which I know it's not actually proof there but that's the way my disordered brain interprets it as like I do something wrong therefore I am awful and everything is my fault and the world sucks because I'm in it. I've actually been thinking about this for a while now but I really haven't had an aha moment.

[00:11:57] I have definitely improved. I.

[00:12:01] If I had to pick one particular moment it was the realization of a.

[00:12:09] Of a trauma that happened when I was fairly young when I was eleven or twelve and I had.

[00:12:17] I don't know if it's suppression or I just forgot about it or I didn't want to think about it but it came out when I was in Tennessee while I was just laying in bed trying to kind of sleep and I actually told my therapy group the next morning and like ugly crying ends not everywhere.

[00:12:35] Not pretty but that was probably the most vulnerable I've ever been with a person and it actually happened with a whole group of other women. So if.

[00:12:48] If I if I picked something it would be that moment is having melt realization and actually telling someone like honestly invulnerable. I got a. Good response out of. The other the other patients and out of the therapist in back group and I think I just. I've started being okay with telling more of my story about point. Up until then I'm even in therapy and in groups I'd never like I'd never told anyone about the details of what had happened. Partially because it goes through my brain that it's it's not that bad. So I think it was.

[00:13:43] It was more an acceptance of the fact that this happened and it is still affecting me to this day even 20 years later. I think part of it is definitely my mom's diagnosis and her rapidly switching between I love you I hate you kind of thing. And she actually denies her diagnosis at this point and she has improved a lot since since I was young.

[00:14:24] And.

[00:14:28] But yeah that was that was a lot of it. Another thing that she did was convinced my brother and I that our dad who they they divorced when I was 2 my brother was 4 and I. She convinced us that our dad hated us and he didn't want us. He also has three older kids. So was I. It kind of planted in my mind this like. We were just mistakes like my my older brother and sisters are are the ones they actually want in that kind of thing and none of this is actually true. Like my dad's a teddy bear.

[00:15:14] I love my dad and him just I didn't spend a whole lot of time with him when I was younger because I thought he hated me and my mom's favorite threat starting when I was probably 12 or 13 was you were going to go live with your dad now and like. To the point

of loading up the car and driving me and dropping me at his office and she did it with my brother to.

[00:15:40] Yeah he he dealt with it in an entirely different way than I did. I mean I kind of internalized it and made it like I'm not good enough. I will never be good enough and I need to make it up and be the peacekeeper and the fixer. My brother. Turned to anger and substance abuse. So he was using buy some time in middle school. Although now he is also doing a lot better. He's. He is a 3 year old little girl and is as as far as I know is completely sober and is turned into a pretty awesome dad.

[00:16:19] So. I hid in my room a lot.

[00:16:35] But I. I did.

[00:16:41] Obviously I eventually learned that my dad is not that person that my mom made him out to be like she had she had so many stories about him like getting drunk and pulling a gun on her which I've never seen my dad. Well OK. I've seen him drunk on New Year's Eve but that's about it. And he's like a goofy happy drunk not pull a gun on your wife drunk. So it was already at this point starting to trust him especially because he He's an M.D. and he was actually the one who got me my first meds.

[00:17:18] And that that was his response to me saying hey I'm depressed and things are not going well versus my mom's response was to either.

[00:17:30] Yell cry blame me guilt trip me or drop me at the door of the hospital. Which happens. Several times more than I was actually hospitalized. Hospitalization 2 was. I had just given up and I was for once blatantly honest with my psychiatrist who said yeah you're not leaving.

[00:18:00] I'm sorry to hear your stance. And then no number three was actually also in 2017.

[00:18:09] That was a quite a year after I. Kind of started. Accepting my PTSD diagnosis that was a difficult transition.

[00:18:24] I also blamed myself for that. In my experience I think the biggest thing that really allowed me to accept that was finding a community of people with that same diagnosis. And I found them on Reddit just like I found you on Reddit and spend too much time on Reddit. So there is actually a c ptsd or complex PTSD Sub Reddit home with like twenty five thousand people in it and the things that they that they describe on there including feelings of like it's really not that bad like I'm blowing this out of proportion.

[00:19:21] Really resonated with me and helped explain some of the symptoms that don't strictly line up with depression. And. Just seeing myself in other people was I was a moment of Oh my God I think I know this is the right one because I like I have cycled through so many diagnoses.

[00:19:48] I mean first one was ADHD but it was the 90s and everyone was diagnosed with ADHD too panic disorder 2.

[00:20:01] There was a little obsessive compulsive disorder in there. There was some bipolar too Leikam. It's been just all over the place. And this one really felt like. I could

actually relate to everything on that checklist. And it also explained why it wasn't getting better with the conventional treatments for depression and why I had these other symptoms that were not quite. Fitting in. I don't have a local. Community. I've kind of fallen back into the. No one really knows about it. Like some people do. I have friends that I still interact with who know I'm sober who know that know what my diagnosis is. Who've even visited me in the hospital. But like that's it we don't talk about it at this point my life like I'm.

[00:21:00] I'm kind of. I'm functioning like I'm functioning as a real person. It's. I. Yeah.

[00:21:09] I'm so I really don't have that community and I have kind of fallen away from the online community because it gets triggering too. And that's not always helpful. But I always know I can go back there if I need the support.

[00:21:30] I also went to AA for a while.

[00:21:34] And did not find that at all helpful. I forgot to mention this one because I've got all sorts of little traumas but I also had a fair amount of religious abuse in my marriage.

[00:21:50] So the the religious part of AA and I do not get along at all. I also don't strictly agree with their abstinence for life policy. AA has these these twelve steps which everyone has heard that the 12 steps and the first is to admit that you are powerless over alcohol. And that was that was my first. My first problem is that I wasn't powerless over alcohol. I was powerless over my trauma and I was using alcohol to avoid it. So it wasn't that alcohol was controlling my life it was that my trauma was controlling my life. And then the second.

[00:22:38] I don't remember the steps exactly off the top of my head anymore but the second has to do with God. And you can define God however you want or your higher power whatever it is. I am no longer a religious person.

[00:22:54] My therapist in Tennessee suggested I look at it as God is Good Orderly Direction but even that didn't feel right. It didn't feel right or real to me and I did not want to give up any more of my power than I already have like I. That's one of the biggest things that I struggle with is feeling like I am powerless over everything in my life and I don't want to give up anymore. So that combined with just the very churchy feel of it like the prayers and.

[00:23:35] It ended up being really triggering and every time I left a meeting I wanted to go to a bar. So I stopped going. A lot of people don't recognize that marital rape is just as traumatizing.

[00:23:58] Just because you're married to someone doesn't mean that you're required to have sex with them. So I just I want to give a little disclaimer that it deals a fair amount with sex.

[00:24:13] Yeah I've I've alluded to the fact that a good chunk of my trauma is sexual too but.

[00:24:19] Just to put that out there on foot. That was a big part of it. So I actually joined the church at 17 when a friend of mine did the same a friend who is now also left the church because she found she found some help with her own diagnosis in it and I delve in headfirst like I tend to do with things and just went all out like I have religious tattoos even that I'm hoping to get removed. One of these to hate us but I so I was going to church and

really involved in any sort of things I was and all these all these sort of religious things are doing child care for services.

[00:25:10] I was in a worship band for a while and I I met a good friend of mine through the organization To Write Love On Her Arms which.

[00:25:26] I look like you're fairly familiar with who I started going to Campus Crusade for Christ at his school with him where I am this is a friend that I am still friends with to this day.

[00:25:45] In that meeting I met my now ex-husband.

[00:25:52] Who was far more conservative and fundamental than I was. I did not realize until literally our wedding day that he was Pentecostal which means speaking in tongues laying hands. So I was. The more mild stuff was I was healed. Healed.

[00:26:20] Air quotes.

[00:26:25] I was. Given prophecy I.

[00:26:35] Yes but that that church was was a trip and then.

[00:26:45] The abuse part came in when he my ex-husband had expectations for my behavior that I did not agree with.

[00:26:59] Our marriage counseling consisted of meeting with an older couple from our church who told us that based on this one verse in the Bible essentially he was in charge of me.

[00:27:13] And that it was his job to love me and my job to respect him and that respect involved. Sleeping without a shirt on. Involved having sex a certain number of times per week.

[00:27:31] And thank goodness I did not get pregnant. That would have made this a much much more difficult thing to get out of.

[00:27:43] And. Ended up with him. Actually tying me down and raping me shortly before I left. And this was not the first sexually abusive relationship I had been in. So I. But it was very different. So I didn't quite see the warning signs again but I did get out after that that first time that I would call actually being raped. I was not allowed to work when I was married so I had no income I had no job. I had been going to school on and off. But I had no degree at that point so I just I had nothing at that point and it was.

[00:28:37] I didn't even have the concept of women's shelters and even if I had at that point I wouldn't have thought I qualified because I wasn't being physically beaten in that relationship. So it really felt like my only option was to either stay with my ex-husband or go back home to my mom.

[00:29:01] I would rather be physically beaten. I would find that a lot easier to deal with.

[00:29:16] It hurts every part of you. It's it's that proof that you deserve this and you are bad and.

[00:29:27] You just you don't deserve love or affection or trust and that this is all your fault. Not. It's not on the person who's actually doing the abusing. It's on you because you deserved it because you are an awful person. And.

[00:29:52] With the physical side with the physical abuse like at least you can say this is not right. Like this might be happening to me but it's it shouldn't be like this is a problem with them. Versus with the emotional beatings. I like how how you put it there. With the with the emotional beatings it's because of you. It's what it feels like it's that it's your fault and you deserve it.

[00:30:28] I. It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to not be perfect.

[00:30:35] And that's.

[00:30:39] I'm gonna screw up.

[00:30:44] And everyone does that and it's it's okay and it's normal to to do things wrong as much as it hurts to do hats that it's it's human and it's normal. To mess up and not be perfect. It's a way to cope. And I. Strongly believe it is an addiction just like any other.

[00:31:18] It's.

[00:31:21] I stopped cutting because I started drinking and found that that was a different way to cope and neither of them are healthy and neither of them really solved the problem. They were just things that I used because I didn't know how else to feel better.

[00:31:41] And I guess the.

[00:31:44] It doesn't have to be that way. Even if it and I wouldn't have believed that when I was younger and I started like I would never. I would never believe that it. It really doesn't have to be that way. Like you don't have to hide and physically hurt yourself to feel better. And there there really can be. Freedom and relief out of connection with other people. Which again is something I'm still struggling with but it. It is certainly possible and it's more fulfilling and far less shame filled to actually just connect with other people and work on healthy coping skills rather than using something like alcohol or self-harm. To. Distract from these other things.

[00:32:45] Or in my case to punish yourself for not being good enough. I feel very hypocritical saying gross because it's something I still struggle with but that. Every person has. Worth just by being. Alive. Just by.

[00:33:20] Existing. A person has worth in a person's life is worth living no matter what has happened to them and they don't have to prove that to anyone not even themselves. But it just it just is it's a. Standard thing. If you're human you have short. Period.

[00:33:45] For more information and to donate please visit youdontfightalone.org.

[00:33:52] You Don't Fight Alone is sponsored in part by mentally chill an improv team talking about mental illness and how it's so hard but no one likes to bother anyone about it. Be prepared to be bothered. Find them on Facebook dot com slash mentally chill improv Instagram at mentally chill improv and at Voodoo comedy beginning this September.

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