

Episode_20_Kelly.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.

[00:00:18] 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.

[00:00:37] There's a lot of rock bottoms in my history and they're kind of sad to myself and they're embarrassing in a way that looking back in hindsight, the fact that I would even think of that to do to myself is really frustrating and sad knowing that like now that I'm somewhat functioning, you know.

[00:01:02] So I've had a few rock bottoms. I've had a mental breakdown where I have cried in the shower and collapsed and thought about grabbing a kitchen knife and bringing it into the shower and just taking care of the business right then and there.

[00:01:18] That actually happened once after my son was born, which was a you know, it's really difficult to think about now, just knowing what I know now that he's five years older. I've had some times where I have just completely shut down from society. So I isolate myself from my friends and family. I didn't get out of bed. I was in a relationship at the time. And he was really trying to help me get out and about just outside of my house. And I would even just sleep through those types of moments as well. Like I would stay in bed. I wouldn't leave. I wouldn't do anything. I didn't talk to anybody. I would do the bare minimum, just like pick up my son, make sure he's taken care of and then go back to bed.

[00:02:05] And it's it's really sad to look at an icon now because it's like I missed out on a lot there, too. So I've had a few rock bottoms in the sense where I didn't think I would come back. I will say the one saving grace that I did have was the fact that a lot of my rock bottoms happened after my son was born.

[00:02:26] If my son hadn't have been born, I don't know whether or not I would have actually made the action of ending my life. But during that time, it's like I was very seriously thinking about it and even walking through the motions. I didn't actually physically do it because I was like, I cannot leave him here to fend for himself.

[00:02:46] And I think that it really was my knight in shining armor because it kept me going when I didn't think I could honestly go anymore. Most recently, my rock bottom happened a couple of months ago. Like I said, I have a few. And again, this was when I realized how serious my postpartum was.

[00:03:06] And when I finally decided to talk to my doctor about increasing my medication, I risked driving down the I twenty five s and the each of you late. And I just kind of phased out a little bit. You know, you're on autopilot, you're just doing what you got to do to try. But I had daydreams of me crashing into the side of the wall and just ending my life right there in a way that it wasn't necessarily my fault or me taking my own life. But in a way that it would be just done with. And, you know, moving on. And when I got into work that morning, I told my boss, who is luckily a very big health mental health advocate. What had happened? And I told her, I'm gonna do a few items here in the office and then I'm going home because I cannot be here right now. And she was OK with that. And I was very fortunate in that regard.

[00:03:57] But that was my most recent rock bottom, and that's when I actually took action to talk to a doctor again and increase my medication.

[00:04:10] My name is Kelly and I am actually been diagnosed with a few things and I have a tiny bit of OCD. I have a very, very high level of depression and anxiety. My doctor actually joked about it a little bit and they know that they can with me, but they were just like for your age, it's tremendous. And I also have PTSD.

[00:04:40] I grew up really conservative. Conservatively, in the sense that I was sheltered, you know, I grew up in Oklahoma and a Catholic family. We didn't really talk about these types of things and you just didn't know about it really, because it wasn't an issue. And we're in the news. And quite honestly, I thought forever I was just OCD based on like I am very tiny.

[00:05:02] I like things a certain way. I have my little rituals were like certain times of the day. And I'm thinking, OK, I just you know, I'm just that type of person type a OCD. And for the longest time, I thought that that's what it was a couple of years ago after I got out of it. A physically abusive relationship. About six years ago now, I went to a doctor just because I was having a really hard time getting out of bad and just functioning in society.

[00:05:33] And I told them about what was going on and just my everyday kind of scenario or my thought process. Now, like you're not OCD like you. Like they said, yes, there's a little bit there, but you actually have an extremely high level of depression and anxiety. The fact that you're functioning the way you are even surprised them because they like they don't know, at least at the time the doctor mentioned that they don't have anybody in their practice that is at you know, about at the time.

[00:06:04] You know, like twenty five, twenty six that had that kind of anxiety or depression that they had treated before. So it was a surprise to them and a surprise to me. I had no idea, but it made a lot of sense when I finally found out about it. But I was just like I've never been medicated before. I have no idea what to expect. I know you have all these stigmas and they told me to go to therapy and I'm like, I don't need a therapist. I'm not crazy. And they said, you don't have to have something wrong with you to talk to a therapist. Sometimes it's just good to talk. And I'm like, alright, I'll approach it from that perspective. Like, I'll just see what I can do. And my whole perspective on just mental health in general transformed in those years to where I do like talking about it and being open about it even in my professional life, because it's a little taboo in my professional world. But at the same time, if you aren't that transparent and talking about it, then you're just perpetuating that taboo ness of oh, that you can't talk about that and like it impacts your everyday life. You should be able to talk about it. So, yeah, my perspective just did a complete 180. And in the course of the diagnosis process, my doctor and I had a pretty good relationship.

[00:07:18] She was a younger professional doctor and I am a very dry, sarcastic person who would love to watch like the office or Curb Your Enthusiasm. Like it's sometimes not super great. Jokes are funny to me, I guess, because of that sarcasm. So she knew that. But because my chiropractor even jokes that like I have the back of an 80 year old woman because my back is horrible. But she did it in a way that she knows that like I like to use humor in ways to cope with serious issues. And she knew that just based on my history with her and she just kind of went into I don't like jokingly is a little of a stronger word that I would liked than I would like to use. But it's the easiest to kind of portray what that looks like. But she used humor in a way to lessen the impact of the news to me, knowing that it

was a very big eye opening news to myself. I got lucky, honestly. Somebody who was willing to experiment with medication with me, I had to go through three different medications. I didn't want to be heavily medicated, even though they recommended a very high dosage. I wasn't willing to do that. I didn't want to rely on that. So she was really open to saying, OK, if you do this, you have to do therapy and you don't have a choice if we go this route. So she was willing to negotiate but still put her foot down to try to create a plan that would help me become more functional in everyday life, which has helped a lot because there are days to this day that are really tough. I currently have postpartum depression as well.

[00:09:00] I have a 13 month old girl and a five and a half year old boy. And I didn't know that I had postpartum in my first post birth experience. I just thought it was just kind of being a new mom and being a single mom just out of an abusive relationship. I just kind of thought that's what it was. And then as postpartum depression became a lot more out there in the world and actually talking to my doctor after my second born, she's like, yes, you do have postpartum. Like, you need to address that as well and adjust your medication for that time being as well. And that's something that we're currently doing, because even though she's 13 months old, I'm. Still very much in it, and I found out it apparently postpartum can last upwards of 210 to two and a half years after babies born and which I did not know that I am living right now.

[00:09:51] So it's a real thing.

[00:10:02] So unfortunately, I'm not in therapy because I had changed insurance providers and I was unable to keep my therapist and I tried online therapy sessions and they were working for a little bit like the new online ones.

[00:10:16] I know there's a couple of ones. This one is I can remember the name of it to save my life. But I know like Michael Phelps has been in a commercial forum. But I couldn't afford it, to be completely honest. I just I couldn't afford four hundred dollars a month just to talk to somebody like it was helpful. And I do see the value, but when it comes down to pennies, like I just couldn't stretch it. So I am not in therapy anymore and that I have seen the impact of that. When when wanting to talk to my doctor about increasing medication, it was really just grappling with my ego and realizing I can't do this alone anymore with what I have.

[00:10:56] I've had three different doctors in the course of my four year span in Denver, just mostly because of insurance changes. It's interesting enough because all three doctors and my therapists have been pushing me to have a higher dosage of my medication for the longest time, and it was really coming to terms with I do need that extra help. I can't be egotistical anymore thinking that I can do this like I'm failing at this right now. So I messaged my doctor. Luckily, I'm on this planet where I can do it remotely instead of having to go in because they're just a pain in the. He started get into. But I was able to message them and let them know what's going on. And just saying like I am not in a good place anymore. I cannot function. It's been recommended that I buy dosage, basically doubling my dosage and that it's in my record multiple times. And he had access to that. And he agreed. I did the assessments, as they always do, to just track their progress. And he agreed to do that dosage increase and decided to say, OK, we'll check in in so many months and see how that's working for you. So the conversation was easy in a sense that it was just I think the record spoke for itself. And the doctor was like, OK, if she's willing to do it, then I'm fine with doing it as well. So it wasn't a hard conversation to

have, but the hardest thing was coming to terms of my own ego and saying I do need the help.

[00:12:28] I can't manage this anymore on my own given the little help that I have. And I just need more of that help.

[00:12:43] So I was in a relationship with an individual in my scenario. I mean, this is kind of me shooting myself in my own foot in terms of like belittling the experience a little bit. And I just do that because I know how serious these things can get. And I was in a mentally, physically and emotionally abusive relationship for about a year. I the person did try to kill me a couple of times while I was pregnant. But at the same time, my parents saw the signs of like when I came and to some family function with bruises are wearing long sleeves. My mother apparently I didn't know this, but my mother said that she had had training around abusive relationships because apparently her mother, my grandmother had been physically abusive relationships before. And so she actually has gone through like that before and knows the signs and also received special training outside of just her own livelihood, having you like her own life experience because of her involvement in non-profits. And she's like, I see what's going on. I know what's happening. And it took about two interventions with my mom and my dad.

[00:13:54] It was by the third intervention and the third time that a big physical altercation occurred while I was six months or not, six months gives me six weeks pregnant that I finally got a wakeup call where I was like, I I can't do this if I'm pregnant, I gotta get out of this.

[00:14:16] So third time's a charm, luckily. But I say that my scenario is different in the sense that my parents were able to financially support me, getting a lawyer, getting a protective order, making sure that I'm separated from that individual. Also making sure that we kept all documentation with the child off the record worth his name no longer involved. So that way I could have a separation. I had a lawyer who was very good at making sure to lay the foundation of doubt of whether or not the child was his because he was a very manipulative person and just always accused you of doing something wrong. So it was pretty easy to convince him that y is like if you wanted to pursue parenting rights, you would have to go through that process instead of just saying like, yes, you're the parent. So I was very fortunate in having support to get out of there. And if I wouldn't have had that, I don't think I would have seen what I saw. I I. So he like the big altercation that happened. I remember it like like a slow motion movie picture, honestly. Excuse me. It was March 3rd. It was after a outing for a restaurant opening. And when we got back to our apartment, I walk in the door and there's like a kitchen island and I turn around and I don't really know why, but I get pushed to the ground pretty hardcore where like I'm getting pushed into the side of the granite countertop on the island and pushed to the ground. And he leans over me and light a cigaret and starts to like blow smoke into my face. And he didn't actually put the cigaret out on me, but he had it hovering to where, like the ashes fell.

[00:16:09] And I don't I mean, I remember him yelling at me. And I remember I clearly remember calling for help and none ever came. And I lived in an apartment. And to this day, I just wonder why didn't anyone say anything? Because the cops could've been there easily. But I then he went outside with his dog. He had a pit bull. I remember. And I ended up going into the bathroom and he came back into the bathroom and pulled me off. I was sitting on the toilet crying and he pulls me off the toilet and I was holding onto the tower rack, not wanting to be like taken. And we ended up playing the track off of the wall when

he did that. And there was a knife in his pocket and he took it out and threatened me with it and then shoved me across the bed. I fell on the other side of that that and started choking me to the point where I passed out. And I woke up the next morning with a couple of bruises on my back and my legs. And I don't really have much clarity of what happened. Like the conversations or the yelling. Like, I just remember those like high points at the back and forth. But it was not not a fun experience. But it was the next day that I realized if I am gonna have this baby, I can't do that to. Or myself. And that's when I made the call to my parents and said, I, I need your help to to get out of this.

[00:17:50] And I think they were more relieved than anything else. To finally hear that I was accepting my son situation and wanting to have help to get out. But that is where it comes from. I didn't talk to anybody for a year after that. I didn't. I couldn't make eye contact with anybody of the opposite sex. I still have issues to this day of making contact or eye contact with members of the opposite sex. It's I've come a long way from from that aspect of it. But I. I didn't want to be near anybody for a very long time. And luckily, in that time, I learned a lot about myself by being isolated. I realized how codependent I was. I realized how that codependency led me to date, the type of people that I date that were very manipulative and very emotionally abusive, but never physically so until recently, you know. And I ended up getting my protective order for five years. My five years are up. As of this last January of 2019, and I had a little bit of a panic attack when that happened, I was like, oh, my God, what am I going to do? My partner assured me he was like, it's been five years. You're not even on his radar. Don't you worry. But I just I moved states since then, you know? So I'm in Denver now. But it's something that really bothers me to this day. If I see a white Chevy Avalanche truck, I get a little mini panic attack. And it was so bad in Oklahoma that that not only was moving part of just my career opportunity, but it was a big underlying reason to move out of Oklahoma because I couldn't even drive down the road without having a panic attack by seeing a singular truck. So that's kind of where that PTSD comes from. You're like a horse running a race with your blinders on. You don't realize what's going on because of the world they build around you. I had no idea how isolated he may be or how I was being controlled. If you have somebody who has that kind of experience, all you can do is just be there for them at the drop of a dime. If anything happens, whether it's in place to stay or, you know, like me to come here with a gun or whatever that might look like. But it's one of those things where they're never going to find out unless they find out for themselves, because you can do everything right and they'll never believe you. And that's who I was. And it took that extreme of a scenario. And being pregnant to make me realize that. And I don't think if I wasn't pregnant, I would have really seen that. I would have just, you know, I don't know if I would have kept going or not. I would like to think that I wouldn't. But at the same time, knowing who I was then, I don't know. I know the pregnancy played a big role in me deciding to, you know, frankly, grow up and you just kind of had to when you're gonna be a parent. I never knew or encountered any type of scenario of anyone getting help. And so when the conversation came up for me to get medication, you think of that stereotype of like, somebody is crazy. They need help. Medication wise and they have to talk to a professional and go to a crazy house. That is the most opposite image that I hope anyone will ever think of in the future when it comes to mental health. It is so different than that. And growing up with that image, you're like, oh, now I am that person. But when you go through it, you're just amazed about how regular it is and how human it makes you.

[00:21:44] And like you do, you have to have help because it's not just your thoughts. It is truly a chemical imbalance that is incurring that you're incurring in your life. Your chemistry and your makeup. And it's like that chemical imbalance plays a bigger part in your whole

livelihood than you ever thought. And what that medication does is help the chemical balance balance back out. So it's not you trying to not be crazy.

[00:22:10] It's literally a scientific balancing of your body. But yeah, that's really how it came to be. We're grappling with the ego thing. Like when I first found out that I had to take medication, I wasn't willing to do that. And I but my doctor really pushed it and I started to get more open to the idea the more we talked about it and just saying, OK, well, let's try some things at the lowest dosage and see what we can find out. And then when we found one that worked for me, she was like, OK, now that you're okay on this, you know, I want to either up this, too, or you need it to be or you talk to a therapist. And that's what we ended up agreeing on, is keeping it low and talking to a therapist. But when I had to think about upping it, it came down to very similar to how my son kept me going in my first postpartum phase.

[00:23:03] My my kids and my family keep me going now.

[00:23:11] I was unemployed at the time I got laid off from a contract. I didn't have really anything else going on. I was feeling my like not initially a midlife crisis. I think they call it what, that quarter life crisis scenario. I wasn't I was a few years older than that, but at the same time, like, I didn't know where I was going. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was like, all right, you know, if anything, hopefully I can get to the root cause or just kind of work this out because I don't like the way I'm feeling now and I have the time to invest into it. So my honestly, like the I think the biggest thing that people really underestimate is the relationship you have with your doctor. And if you are very open and honest with them and are not afraid to tell them the truth of what's going on, you if you're lucky enough to have somebody who cares and most doctors do, they will work with you to find something that's comfortable for you. And I was lucky enough to have one of those doctors because I wouldn't have ever pursued a therapist or, you know, really doing medication without her kind of pushing it in a way, because I just would have never made the conclusion that that's the the help that was needed. And she was absolutely right at the time, like it is the help that was needed. I noticed where a lot of the depression and anxiety stemmed from. I noticed a tremendous difference in my overall just willingness to get out of bed and kind of interact with life or saying, you know, like I I'm going to make it through this.

[00:24:49] Like, I just I didn't want to say I just all of a sudden got optimistic because that's not the truth. Like it is a truck through the forest. And you are trying.

[00:25:00] I mean, your home and I don't remember the name of the character. Harrison Ford played them.

[00:25:07] What was that character's name? Indiana Jones. My God. That's like a knock against me there. So there goes my credibility, right? So in like Indiana Jones going through the jungle and you have to create your own path. And it is not an easy path. And it's going to take a lot of work, an uphill battle.

[00:25:26] And luckily, that was something my therapist laid out in front me right away. She was like, this is going to be a hard situation. This is not easy.

[00:25:38] You are trying to change chemical links in your brain and behavior. And that's going to be like a hard thing to do.

[00:25:47] So although I was feeling more enthusiastic enthusiasm for the day or and enthusiastic about the day, it wasn't just like I over all of a sudden came optimistic. It was very much that trudge through the jungle and realizing why I feel the way that I do and coming to terms with that. And, you know, working through different types of experimentation on some techniques of how to cope with certain situations or how to deal with the root causes of why I feel the way that I do to try and come over that. And for a little while I did. I've noticed by not being in therapy, a lot of that has come back and you try to keep going. But at the same time, again, it's like you, if you don't keep riding the bike through that path every day, then like the snow will cover back up and then you have to start from scratch. That's how she described it to me. I just remember it. But if you don't keep practicing and you forget it. And that's what happened by not going to therapy continuously.

[00:27:09] My partner and I, we've been together for going on like just in friends as friends, we've been we've known each other going on five and a half years. He wants to be helpful. He always is trying to know what he can do to keep me going. But he has made it very clear that he doesn't know how to help. He doesn't know what to do because he doesn't know what it really is to deal with this. So there are times of frustration on my end because I just feel like there's a little lack of empathy. But I also understand that it's hard to have empathy if you just don't know what it is that this person is feeling or encountering as well as he's just so logical that sometimes he's so analytical that sometimes when you're trying to approach something from an emotional standpoint, it is harder to stay. I think it'll grapple with mentally because it's not as logical as maybe know he would like. So it is a sense of frustration in some ways. But at the same time, I do think he's trying to be as understanding as he can be.

[00:28:16] But I don't think he truly understands what it means to deal with a mental illness or like a diagnosis.

[00:28:35] A lot of people who work with me would never know that I encounter it or that they would say, like, oh, she's got her, you know, her stuff together. You know, what she's doing is because I have to and my job. And so I think a lot of people who deal with mental illnesses are similar to where a lot of people don't realize that they're even grappling with something like that. So I feel like there's a couple of ways you could describe that. One way is like, you know, you're you're you're in a rock and a hard place. Right. And you're essentially getting a pressure pushed down upon you, constantly squeezing you and just exerting you of all of your energy and effort, cause you're trying to hold that rock up to keep it from crushing you completely. And so you're so exhausted emotionally, physically, mentally, to the point where you cannot physically function in any type of situation. But it's still pressing on you and you're fighting back constantly to keep that hovering to where you can still operate as a human being. So that's one way that I would describe it. Another way that's a little bit more humorous maybe for those who have kids. It's like trying to go to the bathroom just to be on your phone and be alone and constantly you have somebody pestering you, trying to open the door, unlock it.

[00:29:54] Mom, mom, mom, are you there? What are you doing? I have a question. Can I ask you two questions? Why is the door locked? Can I come in? And then sometimes the door is unlocked. You're like, oh, man, are you here? Let's talk about this. I have a question for you. Can I ask you two questions? I want to tell you that I love you. Did you know that I have a ninja friend named Fred and that all of my friends on my planet from Ninja Planet blew up?

[00:30:16] I think the rock scenario of where it's just constantly pushing you down, trying to crush you, and you really are having to fight for your life by holding that up. And you do that in a way where you're you're going to work. You're showing up for a meeting for school with your children or you're going out on a date with your girlfriend or your boyfriend or your husband or your wife like you are showing up to the day is a battle in itself. And the fact that you get a pet and even just brush your hair sometimes is a huge win. And they don't see those things. They don't realize that that is a huge win for you because you have that rock crushing down on you and getting out of bed and helps you lift that rock a little higher. But they don't see that rock slowly trying to push you down throughout the day.

[00:31:05] So I feel like that analogy is a really easy one to hopefully paint a picture enough to where somebody who doesn't encounter mental illness can understand that it is a constant struggle and it is exhausting on all levels just to show up for the day. And just the smallest thing, even when you are a functioning person with depression and anxiety, sometimes for me, just brushing my hair or having it down is a win.

[00:31:48] Just because you're an individual struggling with a mental illness does not define you or make you who you are. And I don't think it defines me. It is definitely a part of me and something I tackle with everyday. But like, I am a better person because of it. I am more aware and self aware because I have to actively be self prepared to get through the day.

[00:32:11] And so and I think it makes me focus on the things that are worth living for when you do have those downfalls. So I would like to add honestly that just because somebody may be having this or somebody you know has it or they'd go to therapy or they take medication or whatever that might look like, it does not make them or define them is a part of them. But that is not what you should ever focus on. It only makes them a better person. The fact that they are aware of it and they're they're managing it or trying to make it better. That just makes it 10 times better as a person than it does by defining them just based on something that is, you know, a title like mental illness.

[00:33:02] For more information and to donate, please visit youdontfightalone.org.

[00:33:09] 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 that voodoo comedy beginning this September.

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