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*Mental Health
Depression
Faith Crisis*

About This Story

Maggie suffered from mental health challenges from childhood—at least until recently. Over time, she discovered that there are two sides to mental health, and both work hand in hand to help create a whole, healthy person.

This Faith Story offers hope to anyone facing similar challenges or walking beside someone who is. Take it from Maggie: help is available from both sides of mental health.

My name is Maggie Van Patten. I'm from Mesa, Arizona. I am a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and this is my faith story.

I struggled with my mental health. During much of that time, I was angry at God. I didn't feel His love, and I didn't feel like I deserved His love, so I turned away from Him.

I kept wondering, "If God loves us so much, why would He allow these things to happen? Why wouldn't He help me?"

I thought I was doing a good job of hiding how badly I was struggling, but my family could tell. One night my parents took me for a drive. We ended up at a hospital that specialized in mental health care. When I realized they had seen through my act, it changed something inside me. They loved me enough to do something difficult because they wanted to help me.

That experience helped me recognize that people really did

care about me. More importantly, I began to realize that God had placed those loving people in my life.

Later that summer, my grandmother passed away. During one of her final lucid moments, she began speaking with loved ones who had already passed on. She looked through us, almost as though she could see them standing there. The room felt full. Watching that experience made me realize there had to be something more beyond this life.

I thought, If these people love me, and if my grandmother is being welcomed by people who love her on the other side, maybe it's time for me to talk to God again.

I hadn't prayed for more than a year.

I went home, knelt down, cried, and poured out my heart. I even yelled. When I finished praying, I didn't immediately feel anything. But I felt a quiet pull to open my scriptures, to pray again, to return to church, and simply make an effort.

As I acted on those promptings, everything slowly began to change.

I returned to seminary during my junior year. I asked questions. I watched friends prepare to serve missions. Little by little, I began to recognize God's hand in my life.

Eventually I realized something important: God often speaks to me through change. Sometimes I don't recognize His presence while I'm walking through difficult experiences, but when I look back, I can clearly see He was with me all along.

My mental health improved tremendously.

As a missionary, I've now met many people whose experiences remind me of my own. Those experiences have strengthened my testimony that change has purpose.

God does not leave us when life becomes difficult. Instead, He invites us to exercise faith. When we show Him that we're willing to trust Him, He exercises His power to help us and meet us exactly where we are.

As I grew closer to God and trusted Him more, I found that I needed less of the medical side of mental health. That healing didn't happen overnight. Therapy gave me valuable coping skills, and I believe I still needed that help. My relationship with my Savior and the professional help I received worked together. They weren't competing—they complemented one another.

Today I am grateful for both.

If you've experienced anything like I have, let me be a witness that there is hope. Rely on your Savior, Jesus Christ.

I know He knows you personally. He loves you exactly as you are and where you are. He wants to help you.

One of the most repeated invitations in the Book of Mormon is to “come unto Christ.” I know that as I’ve accepted that invitation, He has saved me.

Until your own testimony grows stronger, let mine carry you.

Reach out to the missionaries. Read the Book of Mormon.

Allow others to help you.

You are worthy of love.

You are worthy of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

I have seen that truth time and time again, and I am so grateful for it.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.