

Brené Brown said, "We live in a highly communication available world, but not a very connected world." It is hard to be vulnerable, to share when things are not okay. In the world of Social Media, it is much easier to present an image of perfection. Often, I have found it easier to disengage or to present a mask than to be open, honest, and vulnerable.

Over the course of about eight months, I went through a series of one traumatic experience after another. I commented to a friend of mine that I feel like I was in London during the blitz. I hit a low in mid March of 2017. I began to feel so beat down and depressed that I became suicidal. At the recommendation of my therapist, I started an intensive outpatient program for mental health.

Part of why I am sharing is that it is easy to just present that mask of perfection, to pretend that everything is okay when in reality we are falling apart inside. It is easy to look at someone's mask and believe that they are fine. We all go through trials, we all have struggles. I want you to know that it is okay to not be okay and it is okay to let others know that you are not okay.

There are some stories, some struggles that are meant to be shared and some that should be held close to only a few, trusted friends. For this reason, I am not sharing details of my trials. I also think it helps to keep things vague. We all have different struggles. What is devastating to one person is nothing to someone else.

Recovery is a journey. It does not happen overnight. I still have up and down moments, but now I have the tools to cope with my triggers. Every day is a new chance for greater understanding, greater awareness, greater self love. Every day is a chance to start fresh.

This book is a combination of journal entries, poetry, and artwork. It represents my own personal journey out of darkness. I pray that whatever your struggle, my story will encourage you, inspire you, and give you hope to journey through the darkness. We are not promised a life without struggle. In fact, we are assured of just the opposite.

*"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:4*

*"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 4:8-9*

The key thing to remember is that we are not alone in our struggles. We are not abandoned. In the darkness, it is hard to remember this. We feel alone, because we cannot see the One who never leaves our side. Rest assured, if you are in the midst of darkness, He is there with you. He has been there before and He conquered death and darkness. There is nowhere you can go that is outside of His reach.

*Psalm 139: 7-12*

*<sup>7</sup>Where can I go from your Spirit?*

*Where can I flee from your presence?*

*<sup>8</sup>If I go up to the heavens, you are there;*

*if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

*<sup>9</sup>If I rise on the wings of the dawn,*

*if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
10even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.  
11If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me  
and the light become night around me,"  
12even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.*

### **Journal Entry - January 31, 2017**

*"Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken." Psalm 55:22*

This verse is in the midst of a psalm of anguish and betrayal from a close friend. David is not saying that we will never face trials, he is saying that the Lord will sustain us. It is the difference in foundation - a building in earthquake territory is built to withstand the shaking, built to flow and sway and not fall down. But a building not built like that will crumble and fall when the ground shakes. If I put my trust in the Lord, if I cast my cares on Him, then when the ground shakes, I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, He will sustain me. He will be my shelter and my peace.

I AM GROUNDED IN THE LORD. I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.

### **Journal Entry - February 10, 2017**

This has been the hardest season of my life - the hardest thing I have ever been through. I feel so incapacitated, so unable to handle even the simplest of tasks.

### **Journal Entry - March 6, 2017**

*"1The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." Isaiah 61:1-3*

Each season that passes there is something new and each challenge strengthens me. I think back on the trials of the past and would so much rather face them than what I face right now. I feel so unable to cope at times, so incapacitated. Other times, I feel like I might just make it, but it is a struggle. I feel broken, beat down, and yet at the same time loved and cared for. I am trying to look for the helpers in this season rather than those who stand in judgment. I am trying to stay rooted and grounded - to know that God is

my Advocate and my source of strength, to know that I am not responsible for putting out the fire or for rebuilding.

### **Journal Entry - March 16, 2017**

I think Andrew must get whip lash with how quickly my emotions change. I can go from feeling hopeful and encouraged to hopeless and useless in less time than it takes to write this sentence...

I feel so tired of fighting, so tired of not feeling good enough. I feel so discouraged and feel as if I have no future... as if I went through a huge earthquake, and I am going through constant aftershocks. They happen suddenly and without warning, leaving my emotions devastated. I know there is bedRock beneath - solid ground, but I cannot feel it, I just feel the shifting, shaking ground and I do not know how to make it stop. I need to be "earthquake" proof so that the tremors do not rock me quite so much.

### **Journal Entry - March 17, 2017**

I received an email this morning from an unlikely source. My friend wrote to me:

"good morning dear Becca.....I dreamed of you last night--you were all beat up and flushed and upset. In the dream I comforted you and told you everything would be ok....so I extend the same love to you this morning. I love you, everything will be ok."

I feel so shaken, so out of sorts - like I am drowning and I do not know which way is up. This was a message of hope to me - a love letter from God. I do not know if I will ever not struggle with my emotions, my self-worth - my self - this side of heaven. It is an ongoing battle to fight against my defaults. Just when I feel like I have made some forward progress, *bam* - something hits and I find myself back in that vulnerable place - that place of darkness and despair, I find myself once again feeling like I am back at square one. I need to learn to fight my instincts - to actually *stop* fighting and rest in the One who holds me and carries me. I need to remember my Advocate - I need to let Him fight for me.

EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY

### **DISAPPEAR - March 28, 2017**

[On March 27, 2017, I went through intake for a partial hospitalization program at Vantage Point Recovery. I was so full of pain and anguish. Just getting out of bed and making it to my program each day was an enormous accomplishment. I did not want to go, but I knew that I needed to be there. Tuesday, March 28th was my first day of groups. In one group, Creative Mind, we were asked to express how we were feeling at the time. I wrote a poem that portrayed the turmoil inside. I felt vulnerable and uncertain sharing my poem, but immediately received the encouragement I needed and made a new, life long friend in the process.]

Thoughts swirl in an unending torrent...  
    no beginning and no end  
I feel lost and alone, trapped in the  
    darkness of my mind  
Every choice, every decision, every action  
    seems to point to failure  
What is the point of my life  
    What good have I done?  
Is anyone better for my existence?  
Would they be better off without me?  
The smallest task is overwhelming,  
    the simplest conversation too much to bear  
I want my life to mean something,  
    yet I fear that it is pointless...  
Is there any hope for me?  
    I feel so alone...  
Will anybody notice...  
    ... if I just disappear?

### **Journal Entry - March 31, 2017**

*"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." Psalm 18:2*

I feel so alone, so isolated, so far from God right now. I am so overwhelmed by my emotions - I feel caught in a riptide and I do not even know which way is up. How can I reach out for help if I do not even know where to reach? How can I cry out when I am drowning and cannot breathe?

### **Journal Entry - April 3, 2017**

*"<sup>10</sup>And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.  
<sup>11</sup>To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 5:10-11*

I feel, for the first time in months, a glimmer of hope. My suffering will not last forever and I will come out on the other side stronger for it.

### **THE BREATH OF LIFE - April 4, 2017**

[We were shown an painting in Creative Mind and asked to respond to it. The image reminded me of the creation story in Genesis 1. I wrote this poem about the image.]

Out of the darkness, out of the void...  
    A soft Breath and then a roaring wind

The darkness explodes into a burst of light  
    Shining brightly with a fervent fire  
As the single light gleams in the darkness...  
    More lights fill the heavens, endless diamonds on a field of velvet  
The Breath blows across the endless expanse of sky once more...  
    Carrying with it the pulse of life that expands and grows  
It stirs in the dark and light...  
    Water and land begin to take shape in the void of space...  
Life blooms and seeds sprout...  
    First slowly and hesitantly, then with growing passion  
The earth begins to spin through the expanse...  
    As it fills with the cacophony of life  
Out of the dust of the earth...  
    An unlikely figure begins to form  
It lies there, lifeless and empty...  
    Until once more comes the Breath... the Breath of Life

### **Facebook Entry - April 5, 2017**

Brene Brown said, "We live in a highly communication available world, but not a very connected world." It is hard to be vulnerable, to share when things are not okay. In the world of Social Media, it is much easier to present an image of perfection. Over the last several months, I have found it easier to disengage from Social Media or to present a mask than to be open, honest, and vulnerable.

I am here to tell you that I am not okay. The last eight months have been a series of one traumatic experience after another. I commented to a friend of mine a while back that I feel like I am in London during the blitz. I hit rock bottom about two and a half weeks ago. I began to feel so beat down and depressed that I became suicidal. At the recommendation of my therapist, I started an intensive outpatient program for mental health just over a week ago.

There are moments when I feel almost okay, when I see a glimmer of hope, but they are easily and quickly replaced by feelings of hopelessness right now. I was excited on Monday to get the invitation to join Alpha Chi, but almost immediately began believing that it was all some kind of mistake. It is not easy to ignore the lies that go on inside my head. My perception of reality is skewed.

Part of why I am sharing is that it is easy to just present that mask of perfection, to pretend that everything is okay when in reality we are falling apart inside. It is easy to look at someone's mask and believe that they are fine. We all go through trials, we all have struggles. I want you to know that it is okay to not be okay and it is okay to let others know that you are not okay. There are some stories, some struggles that are meant to be shared and some that should be held close to only a few, trusted friends. I have shared some of my traumas over the past eight months, but not all of them.

I also feel the need to say thank you. I am grateful to the friends who have reached out to me, who know what is going on and have not let me walk this road alone. I am so thankful for Andrew, who is taking such good care of me and making sure that I know I am loved and accepted, that it is okay to not be okay. I am thankful for Lynn, my mother-

in-law, who is coming down to take care of us at the end of the month so that Andrew can go on a business trip.

I am not okay, but I am on the road to recovery. I am choosing, in the midst of my depression, to believe that there will be an end to this. I do not always remember or believe this, but I am allowing for myself to take it one day at a time, to take baby steps on this road to recovery.

### **Facebook Post - April 11, 2017**

I love this post (<http://www.pastorforlife.org/2013/04/getting-our-arms-around-rick-warrens-story/>) and in light of what I am going through, I find it so meaningful. We need to raise awareness about mental illness, to learn about it instead of shutting people out or making comments that lack understanding. Over the years in response to mental illness and health issues, I have heard many well meaning hurtful and negative comments from people close to me who just do not understand. We need to build understanding and compassion, to be willing to learn and share about mental illness instead of condemning or judging people.

### **Journal Entry - April 14, 2017**

I feel so broken right now, so at the complete end of myself. I just want to give up. I am tired of fighting, tired of the constant struggle, tired of the unending tumult of uncontrollable emotion. I feel like I have no hope, like there is nothing left for me. I do not know how to keep going. I am drowning in the waves of depression and I do not know which way is up. I don't know what is TRUE, I do not know what to do or how to respond or how to continue on. I just want to slip away into nothingness. How can I move forward? All I do is leave a wake of destruction.

### **Journal Entry - April 17, 2017**

Today, I checked into a six week residential program. I felt at peace over the weekend about this decision. We went to Disneyland yesterday and had a perfect day. Today, I feel anxious and apprehensive. I feel uncertain. I keep thinking of all the things that need to be done at home and wondering if they will get done. I have no phone and no contact with the outside world for the first week, so I will just have to trust that Andrew can handle things. I go from wondering if he can handle things to thinking they are better off without me. It just leaves me unsettled. I am trusting in God's plan and resting in His promises.

### **SILENCE - April 19, 2017**

[During my first week of residential treatment, I did not have my cell phone or computer. I realized that it was the first time in my life where I was at a place to focus solely on my own self care. It was not easy to sit in the silence...]

I sit alone, in the

S  
I  
L  
E  
N  
C  
E  
of my mind

Learning how to  
just BE

Thoughts swirl...  
My body aches... to do

For so long, my pattern has been one of action  
I do not know how to sit  
alone  
with my thoughts

I heard someone once say  
I am a human Being, not a human Doing

What does it mean to just BE?  
Why do I act as if I am a human Doing?  
... to gain approval  
... to garner acceptance  
... to earn somebody's love

I think if I DO enough, keep busy enough  
I will not have to listen to my self-hatred

I sit in the

S  
I  
L  
E  
N  
C  
E  
of my mind

Can I change just one thought for today?  
If I can nudge one thought positively today,  
then maybe tomorrow I can nudge two

Maybe someday...

- ... I can change the course of my life
- ... with small changes
- ... with quiet moments

Moments where I simply allow myself to BE

Moments in the

S  
I  
L  
E  
N  
C  
E  
of my mind

### **Journal Entry - April 20, 2017**

The amount of mental processing I am doing right now is completely exhausting. I get back to the house just wiped out. I feel like I am at the starting point, the right starting point - focusing on the root issues not the symptoms of the past five months. I wonder if I will be able to move through this... Can I truly learn to love myself?

### **SURRENDER - April 20, 2017**

[While I was still in my first week of residential treatment, I began to process what it means to surrender. I had willingly given up my freedom in order to get help. I could not go for a walk without an escort. I could not take my medicine without someone tracking my doses and handing it to me. I could not just go for a drive or run to the store for groceries. As I surrendered my life, I processed what it means to surrender my thoughts and my will.]

What does it mean to surrender?

To let go of

- ... my selfishness
- ... my pride
- ... my thoughts
- ... my will

Surrender is not easy

I let go, just a little bit

- ... and then grab it back

I am afraid, afraid to surrender

- ... afraid of failure
- ... afraid of losing myself



... afraid of not being loved  
... afraid of being alone  
But fear is the opposite of love  
It is only in letting go of my fear  
... that I truly learn to love  
... and finally  
... surrender

## IT IS TIME - April 20, 2017

[In Creative Mind, we listened to the song “Bridge Over Troubled Waters” by Simon and Garfunkel. We were asked to draw a bridge, showing where we are coming from to where we are going and to express what is in our troubled waters. Dr. Gitty wrote on the board, “In the heart of the darkness, there is a flicker of light waiting to be discovered.” I knew my bridge was to move from my past to the future God to which has called me. It was time for me to stop listening to the lies of my past and trust in Jesus and what He says about me.]

It is time...

to step out of the past  
to walk over / through  
the troubled waters

It is time ... to let go

of trauma  
of abandonment  
of feeling ugly  
of fear  
of thinking I am unworthy  
of anxiety  
of sorrow  
of depression

It is time ... to take shelter,

to walk THE WAY  
to learn my TRUE VALUE

It is time ... to know

that I am loved  
that I am beautiful  
that I can have joy  
that I have a calling  
that I have a purpose  
that I am accepted  
that I have a family

It is time ... to move forward



## **Journal Entry - April 24, 2017**

I have been here for a week now. I am settling in and adjusting to the routine. I am learning how to just BE. It is quiet here, and strange. I am so used to having so many responsibilities or feeling like I am neglecting something if I am resting... but here, my sole responsibility is to work on my mental health, to quiet my thoughts.

I AM ENOUGH. I DO NOT HAVE TO EARN ANYONE'S APPROVAL.

## **Journal Entry - April 25, 2017**

*"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." 1 John 3:16*

The thing about loving others is that I can only give out when I love myself. Otherwise, I am loving out of a sense of need, looking for that person to fulfill something empty in me. When I truly begin to see myself as God sees me and love myself as He loves me, then I am free to selflessly love others, to show the kind of love that Christ shows.

I am making slow, baby steps forward, recognizing my triggers and working on learning how to love myself. It is a long, slow process, but so worth it.

## **NO REGRETS - April 25, 2017**

[William James said, "He who refuses to embrace a unique opportunity, loses the prize, as certainly and surely as if he tried and failed." This was my inspiration in Creative Mind for No Regrets. I wrote it as a sonnet in iambic pentameter.]

I want to live a life of no regrets,  
Where I am unafraid to take a chance,  
A life that cherishes daily sunsets  
Confident in myself enough to dance

I desire to embrace every moment  
Enjoying each unique and precious day  
Never once bowing to an opponent  
Always seeking to pursue things my way

I must take life just one day at a time  
Not trying to get ahead of myself  
To always live this way would be sublime  
Each day a new adventure in itself

This kind of life is harder than it seems  
But I choose always to follow my dreams

## **Journal Entry - April 26, 2017**

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” Romans 12:2*

What I need right now is a transformation of my mind. It will not happen overnight, but little by little I am making progress - chipping away at the years - decades of self hatred. I need to learn to love myself - all of myself - as I am, my sins and my triumphs. I need to learn how to truly “Live and breathe for an audience of One,” and not look to others for my self worth. This is not an easy path that I am choosing to walk, but it is the path of growth.

GROWTH DOES NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT, BUT I AM MAKING CHANGES AND DOING WHAT I NEED TO BE DOING - WHICH IS MORE BE-ING THAN DO-ING

## **NOT MY FAULT - April 27, 2017**

[One of our classes at Vantage Point was Life with Trauma. We talked about various types of trauma, how we respond to trauma, trauma triggers, and coping skills. On this day, Rhonda, our facilitator, talked about how we blame ourselves for the trauma we go through. She said one of the effects of trauma is negative self esteem. When you are traumatized, it gets into your body. You do not just deal with memories, you deal with a physiological experience. When we can learn to separate our trauma from who we are, we can recognize that we go through trauma and consequences as a part of life. It is not my fault that I went through trauma.

As I processed my trauma I finally began to accept that it was not my fault and it does not make me selfish to ask for what I need.]

Trauma...

It infiltrates my mind and the body  
Leaving me in consuming darkness

I want to fight...

to run away...

to just shut down completely...

I do not know why

My emotions overwhelm me

My thoughts are nothing but negative...

I am unworthy of love

I am a horrible person

How could I be so stupid

Why did I do that

It is all MY fault...

I do not know how to break this cycle

I do not know how to pull myself out of this pit  
I try and try and try...  
    but to no avail  
I just sink deeper and deeper...  
I shout and scream for help...  
    but only silence answers me  
The only thing I hear is the echo in my mind  
    of my own negative thoughts  
But then, I hear a whisper  
    so soft, I can barely hear it  
    so faint, I cannot make out any words  
Then, after an eternity, a little louder  
    “My child, it is NOT YOUR FAULT...”  
I see a glimmer of light that quickly vanishes  
I strain my eyes to see,  
    my ears to hear  
I long for acceptance  
    for the warm embrace of love...  
Just louder than a whisper, I hear again  
    “My child, it is NOT YOUR FAULT...”  
Another distant glimmer of light...  
This time, it stays  
I reach toward it...  
    strain with everything in me  
Desiring the warmth of that small spark  
After what feels like another eternity  
    “My child, it is NOT YOUR FAULT...”  
Time passes...  
The Voice grows louder,  
    the light grows brighter  
It seems as if I have lived in this darkness...  
    ... forever  
But dawn is coming...  
    slowly...  
        steadily...  
The Voice repeats over and over  
    “My child, it is NOT YOUR FAULT...”  
After yet another eternity  
    I feel the light on my face  
        the warm embrace  
I can finally come to understand  
    they did the best they could  
        my Trauma is  
            NOT MY FAULT

## Journal Entry - April 27, 2017

One of the things we talked about in "Life with Trauma" today was the idea that trauma happens to me, but it is not my fault... I do not need to own every traumatic event in my life. I need to stop taking responsibility for things over which I have no control. I need to own my own feelings, responses, and actions, but I must stop owning everyone else's. I need to recognize my value and my worth - it is intrinsic - there is nothing I can do to change it. As I begin to love myself, I am free to truly love others.

MY VALUE AND WORTH IS INTRINSIC... IT IS NOT BASED ON ANYTHING I DO OR DO NOT DO... I AM LOVED JUST AS I AM.

## Journal Entry - April 29, 2017

*"I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord."* Exodus 6:7-8

When I fell into depression again, I was mad at God, mad that I was in this place **again**... I thought He had healed me, so why am I back here? But I have come to realize that healing was a gift of time... time to learn, time to grow, time to gain perspective. I gained the inner fortitude to do the real work that I am doing right now, the capacity to search deeply and to dig out the roots... to really look at myself. I cannot look backwards and say, "I wish... If only... Why didn't He..." I can only look at the present and say I am here now. I am doing the work I need to do right now. I can look to the future and say where am I going from here? Do I want to go back to the slavery of Egypt or step out into the scary unknown that leads to the Promised Land? I imagine that crossing the Red sea must have been terrifying... seeing the water held back by the Hand of God, wondering if it was going to come crashing down on them... they had seen God's miracles in Egypt, but that does not mean that they were not terrified of God's awesome power. I wonder if any / how many ran back into slavery out of fear. I can choose to walk forward, to take the terrifying, difficult path that leads to the Promised land, or I can choose to run back to slavery out of fear. I do not want to go back to slavery. The road to the Promised Land is not easy. It requires humility, vulnerability, perseverance, fortitude, trust, and courage, but that is the road I choose to take... the path through the Red Sea, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey... a land where I finally learn to be vulnerable... a land where I finally no longer live in isolation... a land where I finally love myself and understand that my worth is not in what I DO...

Yesterday, for perhaps the first time in my life, I was able to truly say I love myself and actually believe it. I did brain spotting in therapy and I was able to tell my younger self that I am loved, that I am beautiful, that I will be okay, that I am not alone. I felt a true sense of hope for my future.

I LOVE MYSELF. I AM BEAUTIFUL. I HAVE A HOPE FOR MY FUTURE. I AM NOT ALONE

### **TO MY YOUNGER SELF - April 30, 2017**

[One of the tools we used in therapy is called Brainspotting. This therapy allows you to access traumatic memories and feelings in such a way that your brain can heal parts of itself. It was incredible to go through a memory and feel the emotions of the moment - fear, anger, depression, anxiety - and then feel those emotions fade away as my brain healed.

For most of my life, I have felt like I was on the outside looking in - nearby, but never part of the crowd. I had friends, but always questioned whether or not they really liked me. I never felt like I belonged. Working on this emotion in brainspotting, I went back to my childhood and a time where I felt isolated and alone. I spoke to my inner child and assured her that everything would be okay. That day was the first time in my life where I said to myself, "I love you" and actually meant it and believed it. I wrote about what I would say to my younger self, if given the opportunity.]

I know you are frightened  
and you feel so alone  
Trapped in the isolation  
of your mind  
I know that you do not  
know how to handle  
These overwhelming feelings  
that encompass you  
The darkness feels threatening  
and you do not feel safe  
I know that you wonder  
if anybody cares  
If they know that you are lying  
so alone and scared  
I want to tell you something  
listen close, my dear  
It is okay to cry  
it is okay to feel afraid  
But I want you to know  
that you are not alone  
And remember this  
your feelings do not define you  
I am here with you  
and God is watching over you  
I want to remind you  
of some important Truths  
You, my dear, are lovely,

beautiful beyond compare  
You are a priceless treasure  
    uniquely created for a purpose  
Darling, you are not alone  
    I am right here with you  
When you feel this way  
    know that God is carrying you  
And sweetheart, most importantly  
    I want you to know  
You are accepted just as you are  
You are loved just as you are  
You are redeemed just as you are  
There is nothing you have to do  
    nothing you can do  
To earn acceptance, love, redemption  
    God already paid the price

### **Journal Entry - April 30, 2017**

*"The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." Exodus 14:14*

I am feeling off today - feeling like I am getting sick, missing my family, missing being in my own home and my own bed, missing the freedom to do what I want when I want, to drive myself... I just feel in a bit of a slump today... but I know I am where I am supposed to be, I know this is good for me. I am going to choose to keep doing the work I need to do, to keep moving forward, to not allow myself to sit in this slump. I may not be able to control my *feelings* - they just *are*, but I can control my actions, my responses to those feelings.

### **Journal Entry - May 1, 2017**

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet He did not sin." Hebrews 4:15*

It is easy to think that Jesus does not understand my struggles, my suicidal thoughts, my overwhelming emotions... how can He understand a woman? And yet Hebrews states that He understands all that we go through. Depression - He sweated *blood* in the Garden of Gethsemane. I think He was feeling a bit of duress there, to say the least. Suicide - He could have stepped down off the Cross and it would have been suicide for all mankind. Overwhelming emotions - just read about His righteous anger, His compassion for the crowds, weeping with His friends... He truly knows and understands what I go through.

### **Journal Entry - May 2, 2017**

*"What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone." Exodus 18:17-18*

We were created to live in relationship, to bear one another's burdens, to not try to go it alone. For so long, I have felt so much on the outside - I have gone through the motions of working alongside others, but never truly felt accepted. As Jethro said, it only wears me out. I must come out of my isolation and stop trying to live life on my own. I must accept that I am accepted.

I AM LOVED AND ACCEPTED. I WAS NOT CREATED TO LIVE LIFE IN ISOLATION. I WAS CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIP.

### **Journal Entry - May 3, 2017**

Rejection... that is one of my greatest pains - feeling rejected by people over and over again... it has felt like a theme in my life and I keep waiting for the next rejection. I keep waiting for Andrew to realize that he has had enough... BUT, this is not reality... I am not "a reject." Jesus knows what it feels like to be rejected. He felt it on the Cross... rejected by the rulers of the land, rejected by the Pharisees, rejected by the people, rejected by His closest friends... rejected by God... He chose rejection so that I can be accepted. I do not need to feel rejected because I am accepted by God. Rejection is a thing of the past. I chose to move forward into the loving and accepting arms of Jesus.

I AM NOT A REJECT.

### **Journal Entry - May 5, 2017**

Progress... baby steps... I am making progress. Yesterday, I did not completely get over how I was feeling - I was in a funk all day, but I was aware of it. Awareness is just the first step toward a change in actions. I was able to talk about my feelings without accepting them as reality. That is definitely major progress.

I DO NOT NEED TO BE PERFECT, I JUST NEED TO KEEP FALLING FORWARD AND KEEP GETTING UP TO TRY AGAIN.

### **PEACE - May 9, 2017**

It is only in learning  
To love myself  
That I am able to look past  
The pain I feel

I rest in the knowledge



That I am not alone  
I am no longer blinded  
I finally see the Truth

Calming the storm inside  
Acceptance instead of rejection  
Forgiving and forgiven  
Love instead of hate

Friendship surrounds me  
Like a soft summer breeze  
The warmth of friendship encircles me  
Like a blanket of sunshine

I can face the future  
With courage and tenacity  
I am completely at peace  
With myself and with the world

## **HAIKU**

### **DARKNESS - May 3, 2017**

Endless swirling thoughts  
Reaching out of a dark void  
Chaos reins inside

### **HOPE - May 3, 2017**

A spark in the dark  
Shining brightly in the void  
A flicker of hope

### **FRIENDSHIP - May 9, 2017**

A soft, warm embrace  
Encourages me today  
Arms encircle me

### **INNER LIGHT - June 15, 2017**

Words on a blank page  
A heart full of gratitude  
Pours from inner light

### **Journal Entry - May 10, 2017**

I don't know how to process my emotions, how to move through them. I do fine for a while, and then something triggers me and it is a physical response - my heart clenches, my stomach feels tight and nauseous, I feel dizzy and shaky and like I cannot

breathe. I am trying to keep thinking positive affirmations, trying to change my thoughts and feelings, but part of me just wants to stay here, to dwell on the negative - it feels almost safe and comfortable. And I am so mentally exhausted right now.

How can I hope to have any sort of future? It terrifies me. The thought of not doing anything and the thought of actually achieving my goals - it feels like too much. I don't know how to move forward. What if I am just screwed up and not worth anyone's time or attention? What if I am not worth the effort?

All I can do is keep trying, keep getting up, and keep moving forward. I have to trust that God created me for a purpose, that He will direct my steps.

I AM IN GOD'S HANDS

### **COME HOME - May 11, 2017**

This is when Drew ran away for the third time.

Lost and alone  
Letting out a soft moan  
Come home, my child, come home

In the cold and the dark  
Have you lost your spark  
Come home, my child, come home

You have no need to fear  
We will always be here  
Come home, my son, come home

### **Journal Entry - May 13, 2017**

*"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." 2 Corinthians 12:9*

The last couple of days have been rough... It is so frustrating to feel so powerless to do anything - to be so powerless.

I am frustrated with feeling judged by people who do not understand... I just hurt. Last night, I felt so completely out of sorts. I did not know what to do or how to respond. I miss my family, but I also feel like I am such a failure, like I am such a disappointment. I wonder if the pieces of my life can ever be put back together.

I wanted Andrew to come to the house last night, to get a hug, but Adam said no - he reminded me that I am here to work on my issues, to sit in the discomfort and learn how

to move through it instead of going back to my defaults. It was not easy to do, but I did it and ended up having a fun evening here playing Trivial Pursuit.

So here I am, trying to put back together the pieces of my life, trying to learn to trust, to let go, to allow God to work on me. I do not know what the future holds. I do not know how to move forward. It is not easy, but I will keep pressing on, keep persevering, keep moving forward.

IT IS OKAY TO LET GO, TO NOT BE IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING

### **Journal Entry - May 14, 2017**

*"I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God."  
Psalm 69:3*

It is Mother's Day... on one hand, I am excited to go out to dinner with my family, on the other hand, I am slightly nervous about seeing Drew for the first time in over a month... especially given recent behavior.

I am trying to not have any expectations about how today is supposed to go. I think I so often want my birthday, Mother's Day, Christmas to be such a big deal because I am looking for validation - that people like me, are thinking of me, that I am a good mother, etc. I am looking for some unrealistic need to be met. I think it also stems from so often feeling forgotten or neglected on my birthday.

So today, I will choose to be content with simply going out to dinner. Anything else is a bonus. This work of digging deep, of dealing with my emotions, all of this is exhausting and hard, but it is empowering to learn that I can sit in the discomfort, that I can make it through, that I can gain more awareness, that I can make different choices. I will not stop trying, I will keep pressing on, I will continue to grow into all that God has for me.

Today is also emotional for me, thinking about my own mother... thinking about her rejection. I know that she has only responded out of her own hurt, weakness, and sickness, but it is still so painful to be in this place of knowing that she continues to believe her delusions and continues to choose rejection over reconciliation.

### **Journal Entry - May 14, 2017**

*"The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad." Psalm 118:24*

I am taking responsibility for my issues, accepting ownership of my thoughts, feelings, and emotions. It is not easy - the feelings have not gone away entirely, but I am choosing to not let the feelings define my view of reality. I am choosing to live beyond my feelings. It is like when I went through depression the first time - I had to rely on knowledge - now what I knew to be true in faith because I could not FEEL God's Presence, but that does not mean He does not love me.

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS, BUT I KNOW WHO HOLDS THE FUTURE.

The one thing I am learning here in terms of faith is that I do not have to buy in to everything they do to receive benefit. I believe God placed me here and I want to get everything He has for me that I can. In places where something does not fit, I pray for protection and modify words or phrases to match my faith. I do not need to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

### **Journal Entry - May 16, 2017**

Each day is a chance for a fresh start, a chance to make better choices. One thing I keep being reminded of is that stumbling is just that - stumbling - it does not mean I am back at the beginning. It does not mean I have lost all progress. God brought me out of Egypt. The Israelites had plenty of stumbles along the way and in the Promised Land, but they never went back to Egypt.

STUMBLING IS NOT A LOSS OF PROGRESS, IT IS A CHANCE TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW - TO STUMBLE FORWARD!

### **WHO AM I? - May 16, 2017**

It is easy to think of myself in terms of the negative  
What I do not do, where I feel like a failure  
But what does it look like to see myself for who I truly am?  
What is the Truth?  
What is real and what is just my own destructive mind?

The Truth is that I am a daughter of the King  
God created me in my mother's womb  
He formed me in the darkness

If I can learn to see what is True  
If I can look past the lies I have believed  
Then I can finally, genuinely love myself  
I can finally begin to see...

I am a princess, I am royalty  
I am beauty beyond compare  
I am unique and precious  
I am a priceless treasure

I am perfectly imperfect  
My imperfections do not make me a failure,  
They only make me human

## **PROGRESS - May 16, 2017**

Progress does not come without setbacks  
The path of life is never a straight line  
There are highs and lows  
    Peaks and valleys  
        Shortcuts and detours  
As we journey toward our destination

A stumble does not mean I am back to the beginning  
It simply means I am human  
    I made a mistake  
        I let my emotions control me  
            I gave in to temptation  
But I can pick myself up and journey forward

## **Journal Entry - May 17, 2017**

It is amazing to feel the transformation going on both physically and mentally. Physically, I feel stronger. I have better control of my breath, I can do more, push myself farther. I have more energy and need less sleep. Mentally, I finally love myself. I am gaining true self confidence. I am feeling accepted, more a part of the group. I feel more at peace with myself and with the world. I am better able to face conflict with an awareness that my feelings are not always a reflection of reality. I have been able to let go - to surrender and not need to be in constant control. I am able to look at myself and recognize that I am imperfect, that I have made mistakes, and not see myself as a failure. I am setting a new path for my life. I am choosing to do the hard work of changing, of growing, of seeking sanctification. It is not an easy process, but it is so worth it.

I AM LIKE A CATERPILLAR IN A COCOON, TRANSFORMING INTO A  
BREATH TAKING BUTTERFLY

## **Journal Entry - May 20, 2017**

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10*

Yesterday, I had a moment where I felt myself getting triggered - I could feel my heart begin to speed up and my body begin to tighten, I started to feel nauseous. But I was able to recognize it, breathe through it, and watch it, feel it just melt away. It felt so wonderful and empowering. I feel like I have come so far.

I am learning that discomfort does indeed pass. I can sit in it. I can make it through. I feel so light, so free... like I have carried the weight of the world my entire life and I have finally let go of it... I have finally set aside the things that are not mine to carry - the lies I

have believed, the burdens that are not mine, the shame of never feeling good enough or feeling like I belong.

I AM LOVED AND ACCEPTED. I AM BEAUTY BEYOND COMPARE. I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE. I AM UNASHAMED.

### **Journal Entry - May 21, 2017**

Today is the Lord's. I put my trust in Him. It is not easy to let go of my pain, my trauma, my hurt. It is a daily choice. It requires constant vigilance to not let the lies creep back inside my mind. I must take it a daily choice to lay it down, to put my life in God's hands, and to trust in Him and His Truth.

I MUST CHOOSE EACH DAY TO LISTEN TO TRUTH, TO TRUST IN GOD, AND TO SET ASIDE THE LIES.

### **Journal Entry - May 2017**

*"For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5*

Lord, You are good to me. I am so grateful for this time to learn who I truly am, to begin to clear away the lies and get a glimpse of my true self - my perfectly imperfect self. Help me to hold on to what is TRUE. Help me to be mindful, to forgive, to trust, to love. Help me to be all that You created me to be. Thank you for carrying me through the wilderness, through the dark times. Thank you for leading me and guiding me in the good times - in the springs of my life. Blessed be Your Name!

I AM NEVER ALONE. GOD IS ALWAYS WITH ME, GUIDING ME, LEADING ME, AND CARRYING ME WHEN I NEED IT.

### **Journal Entry - May 2017**

*"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32*

This is my prayer today - that I will be forgiving, that I will pray blessings over those who have wronged me, that I will not hold on to bitterness, offense, or resentment. It is not an easy thing to do. My mind wants to hold on, to accuse people, to stand in righteous indignation and judgment. I must purposefully, consciously change each negative thought, to forgive, and to let go.

I CHOOSE TO FORGIVE AND SPEAK BLESSINGS INSTEAD OF CURSES.

## THE TREE OF LIFE - May 25, 2017

[In Creative Mind, we were asked to draw the tree of our life. I wrote this about the image I created.]

The tree of my life is abounding and bursting  
With fruit ready for the harvest to come  
My roots dig deep into the Rock,  
Into the Wellspring of Life

It was not always so overflowing with growth  
The scars of pain and trauma remain  
The ashes of my past help to nourish me  
They give me the strength to grow

Each day is a chance for a new beginning  
It is a fresh start, a blank page  
The trauma that remains threatens to burst forth  
To set ablaze the progress I have made

I must dig deep into my roots  
Stay focused on my path  
Trust in the Word of Life  
So that I can keep at bay the shadow



## Journal Entry - May 29, 2017

*“Praise be to the LORD, for He has heard my cry for mercy. The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise Him.” Psalm 28:6-7*

I go home today. I am excited and slightly anxious. It will be wonderful to be back with my family, in my own home, my own bed, once again to be able to come and go as I please. At the same time, I will also once again face all my triggers. I will once again be put to the test. My future is uncertain.

I feel ready to face these uncertainties, ready to step into the unknown... I feel like the Israelites - I am leaving Egypt behind me, leaving slavery and oppression behind, but the future is uncertain and I do not know where I am headed. All I can do is trust God to lead me guide me to the Promised Land. Each step is a step of faith. I do not know what lies ahead, but I **know** WHO I am following.

I AM HEADED TO THE PROMISED LAND, FOLLOWING THE LORD EACH STEP OF THE WAY.

## **Journal Entry - June 1, 2017**

*"For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13:12-13*

Remembering to listen to what is TRUE is not easy. I can get so easily side-tracked, to ruminate on simple phrases that do not mean what I interpret them to mean. I look at the world through a clouded lens so often. I am grateful for the cheerleaders in my life who remind me of God's calling on my life.

I AM MORE THAN A CONQUERER AND I WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS SEASON VICTORIOUS, RELYING ON THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD.

## **THE SEED - June 1, 2017**

[In Creative Mind we talked about looking at life through a new lens of progress, rather than seeing only the negative. This was my response. A small seed may seem insignificant, but as it grows, it can produce an incredible harvest.]

Life begins small, in the tiny capsule of a seed  
At first, the changes seem insignificant  
Slow, minuscule progression

The seed sprouts, it begins to reach out  
Growth happens, first gradually, deliberately  
Roots begin to take hold, to spread out

The first blossom of life peaks out above the fertile soil  
Tender and fragile, but bursting with life  
It is the hope of future harvest

Moment by moment, day by day, it grows  
Stronger with the passage of time  
Roots dig deeper and branches reach out

My life is like this tiny seed  
Progress and growth begin in small, seemingly insignificant moments  
Daily decisions, new habits, different ways of thinking

As I step out on this unfamiliar path  
Each tiny movement forward is a step of victory  
Every stumble onward a triumph

I press on, determined to persevere  
Resolute in my decision to change



Struggling, but confident in my pursuit of a different path

I seek out new life, new growth, a new harvest  
I pursue my dreams tenaciously  
Determined to make a positive change in the course of my life

### **THUNDERSTORM - June 2, 2017**

[In our session on Symptom Management, we talked about imagery of depression and anxiety. Rachel asked the question, "If you could describe depression/anxiety in a word or image, what would it be?" This is my description of feeling overwhelmed by emotion.]

Clouds swirl and lightening flashes  
Violent and unpredictable in their intensity  
Colors dim in the maelstrom  
Leaving a wake of dull lifelessness  
Gale force winds blow  
Sweeping away everything in their path  
Threatening to destroy everything good  
The storm is uncontainable, unquenchable  
I cannot calm it on my own, I feel out of control  
I cry out in the midst of the storm  
Seeking a peace beyond myself  
Asking for help to tame the torrent  
A calm settles over me  
The storm does not pass completely  
But I rest in the eye of the storm  
Safe in the embrace of Love

### **Facebook Post - June 6, 2017**

On the evening of April 13th, I found myself lying on the floor of my closet holding on to a bottle of Norco. I knew I had enough pills left in my current prescription to end my life because I had researched what it would take. I managed to reach out to a friend of mine for prayer and promised to not take any of the pills. I did, however, harm myself. Not physically, but I ended up sending an email that was very self destructive. I put close relationships at risk because I felt such deep pain and could not see any way out. I blamed others for my emotional state and I let my emotions control my actions rather than taking responsibility for my emotions. When you are in a heightened and prolonged state of trauma, as I have been, everything feels threatening. An innocent comment feels like a life or death situation.

The next day, my therapist recommended that I consider a residential treatment program. After careful thought and prayer, I felt like this was the best course of action for me. On Monday, April 17th, I entered a six week residential treatment program at Vantage Point Healing House. One of my biggest breakthroughs happened on the day

where, for the first time in my life, I finally was able to say, "I love myself," and truly mean it.

When I entered treatment, my therapist diagnosed me with Borderline Personality Disorder. Last Friday, she said that she felt like I was in remission. My road to recovery is far from over. I came home a week ago and it has not been an easy adjustment. I keep reminding myself that just because I get emotionally dysregulated, it does not mean I am back to square one. I just means I encountered a really strong trigger.

It is terrifying to admit to the world that I have BPD, scary to share my story, to tell you that I needed to go into residential treatment for mental health. But if I do not share my story, who will? If we cannot have an open and honest conversation about mental health, then it will forever remain a stigma. I think that every high school senior should go through a year of therapy. Even if you have the world's best parents, we are all imperfect. As Pete Scazzero says, "Very, very few people emerge out of their families of origin emotionally whole or mature."

Most of my issues stem from childhood feelings of rejection, abandonment, isolation, lack of validation, and a lack of affection. According to my psychiatrist, these feelings create far more trauma than abuse. My parents were far from perfect, but they did the best they could with what they had. They simply were not able to give me what I needed. I love them and I will always be grateful that my mother chose to keep me - I was an "oops" baby. I am thankful that they loved me to the best of their ability. I no longer blame others for my trauma. I am responsible for how I choose to deal with my issues, for how I choose to walk forward. I choose to walk forward with tenacity.

*"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12-14*

### **Journal Entry - June 16, 2017**

"and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."  
Ephesians 6:15

This has always seemed like an odd way to describe peace to me. Readiness? Fitting your *feet*? What does that have to do with *peace*? I think I am beginning to understand. Peace is not about stillness. It is about action. The Greek word is *eirene* - peace, tranquility, freedom from worry. It means you are ready to move forward because you are not afraid of what lies before you. It means that each step I take is on in which I am trusting God, I am walking in His path, I am ready to face whatever comes because I know He is with me. Peace is not quiet meditation, it is action and forward movement.

I CHOOSE TO WALK IN PEACE

## **THE GIFT - June 15, 2017**

[In Creative Mind, we watched Louie Schwartzberg's TED Talk on Gratitude and then responded to it.]

My life is an offering, the simple gift I bring  
I lay it down as a treasure to the King  
All that I am and all that I will be  
Everything I have I present to Thee

My heart, my mind, my will, my soul  
To follow You completely is my goal  
Each day drawing closer to my Lord  
Each day renewed, bathed in His Word

My hopes and dreams are but a reflection  
Of Your incredible love and affection  
My desire is to mirror Your Light  
A small glimmer in the darkest night

So each day I offer the gift of my life  
Leaving behind my pain and my strife  
You are my life, my hope, and my song  
Safe in Your will I can never go wrong

## **MY JOURNEY OUT OF DARKNESS - June 20, 2017**

Trapped in the deepest darkness  
No foreseeable way out of the depths  
Blackness surrounds and encompasses  
Rolling emotions of pain and struggle  
Drowning in impossible expectations  
Of myself...

Breath evades me, my senses are untrustworthy  
Is there a spark of life? A reason to continue?  
I am caught in the trap of my own making  
Shackled in chains, unable to see the Light  
Haunted by dreams of terror

But in the midst of that overwhelming darkness  
There is a Presence  
I know that I am not alone  
I wait in the darkness  
Wait for the day when I will be set free

Wait for the day when the chains will fall

Eternity passes in the darkness  
Then I hear a soft sound in the silence  
Where there was only silence, footsteps fall  
A door creaks open and flickering shadows appear  
In I walk, tentatively and uncertainly  
Finally recognizing that I have  
The keys to unlock myself

I carry myself out of this prison of my own making  
Bringing that part of me  
Into the light of day  
I embrace the wholeness of myself  
I allow myself to become reacquainted  
With that part of me I left hidden away

I am no longer afraid, no longer bound and chained  
I allow the light to fill me  
A sunrise into a new day  
I rest in the healing Presence  
Of the One who was always with me  
In the darkness

### **Journal Entry - June 24, 2017**

*“Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.” Psalm 69:1-3*

I woke up this morning just grumpy, not really knowing why - just everything - feeling so out of sorts. Stopping and taking my quiet time and pausing to do some relaxation breathing has changed my mood entirely - I feel calm and a sense of peace, ready to face my day and to be productive.

GOD GIVES ME THE TOOLS I NEED TO CHANGE MY OUTLOOK

### **DAWN - July 11, 2017**

[On Tuesday, July 11, 2017, I graduated from Vantage Point Recovery. I wrote this poem that morning to describe my journey.]

In the midst of darkness, of never-ending midnight  
I had no hope for dawn  
I thought this night would never end

And I wanted this shadow to envelope me,  
To release me from my pain

But my will to live was stronger  
Than my desire to die  
I struggled and fought against the darkness  
I cried out in my agony and despair  
And to my surprise, someone heard me

Tenacity took over and I embraced change  
At first, my steps were shaky, tentative  
I stumbled and fell over and over again  
I thought I would never find my way out  
Of the torment of my mind

But with each stumble, with each fall  
I learned and grew stronger  
I found courage to face another day  
In the words of my friends, the embrace of my loved ones  
And the arms of my loving Father

Each triumph propelled me forward  
Gave me hope to face another day  
And slowly, the darkness lifted  
I could see the colors of dawn  
Begin to spread across my life

As I step into this new dawn  
Eager to leave the darkness behind  
I know that the shadow always waits  
Ready to try and pull me back down  
Into that eternal blackness

But now, I am prepared  
I know how to navigate the night  
How to push back the darkness  
I am assured that I am never alone  
And that dawn always comes

The brilliant colors of a new day  
Surround and envelope me now  
I feel the warmth of the sun, of the Son  
Life and vitality await as I finally take hold  
Of the knowledge that I am loved

I see my destiny before me

Shining in the brightness of the dawn  
The possibilities are endless  
As I embrace life and love and joy  
And I am at peace

### **Journal Entry - July 13, 2017**

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17*

I graduated from Vantage Point two days ago. It is intimidating to not have my 'safety net.' but also empowering to know that I am ready. I feel strong and courageous - ready to face my future. I feel at peace. So many of my friends have commented on the difference - that I look brighter, as if a weight has been lifted, and this is so true to how I feel. The other thing that has stuck with me and humbled me is the number of people who have seen greatness within me - seen a ministry and a reach far beyond my local church. Andrew has always seen this and to have it reaffirmed is so empowering and humbling to me. Knowing my potential, I am motivated, spurred on to embrace it, to make the most of it, to reach out, step out, soar. God did not create me to hide in the shadows.

I WAS CREATED TO SOAR

### **THIS BEAUTIFUL BODY - July 16, 2017**

[One of the gifts I received in this journey is a self love that I never had - love for all my strengths and all my weaknesses. I finally came to a point where I could love my body as it is, not how I wish it to be, with all of its imperfections.]

THIS BEAUTIFUL BODY

My body is beautiful

Do not listen to what the world may say

Media will tell you that I am ugly

That I am worthless

That I am weak

In fact, I am strong

Stronger than you think

Stronger than you can imagine

This beautiful body of mine has been through more than you know

Sickness and pain that most will never experience

Sorrow and anxiety that most do not understand

Growth and change in ways that are incomprehensible

This beautiful body has carried me through life

Through the darkest night

Through the bright, new dawn

Through the ups and downs of life

God created this beautiful body  
For me to love and cherish  
I will no longer be ashamed of  
This beautiful body