

November 2004 **I've got a problem**

I'm sitting at my parent's kitchen table. Crying. Scared. This isn't the first time I've felt this way. I can't see my way through this. Every direction I turn to in my mind has a negative outcome. Every idea I have to improve my life requires energy to make changes that I simply can't muster. My parents are brilliant. Concerned and supportive, they won't allow me to spend too much time alone.

I thank God for that, and for them.

December 2004 **The doctor's visit**

Ashamed, stigmatized, all nerve endings on high alert – I await my appointment with the doctor. She asks gentle questions, but I don't think she needs to hear the answers. I'm one big ball of anxiety, tears and negativity, right there in her surgery. She explains the possible side effects of anti-depressants and requests to see me in two weeks. She also requests I call her at any time should I feel worse.

She is an angel of hope for me. I am a lucky girl.

1 week later

There is a faint buzzing in my ears and I have slowed down. I no longer feel as though all of my nerve endings are exposed. I'm experiencing very lengthy, bizarre dreams in my sleep, but apart from that I feel more stable.

I take some baby steps forward, making a couple of small decisions. My world doesn't fall apart like I thought it would.

January 2005 **A new job**

My mother suggests I look for a job that will be easy for me to do well. She wants to set me up for success. I find one. She was right. In my normal state I could do this job standing on my head, but right now it's enough of a challenge to keep me going. I can't imagine trying to perform in a role more demanding than this one right now. I am grateful.

I begin to confide in friends carefully selected for their empathy quotient. Most are supportive, a few worry about me being on medication. I tell them I can't imagine coping without it. One in particular gets me up at 6am for a swim twice a week. I'm frustrated at my slower pace in the water. I can't seem to activate any adrenalin like I used to. But the water feels great and I know my body loves it, even if my mind would rather be asleep, tucked away from the world.

March 2005 **Paul**

Paul Hester of Crowded House takes his life. I am broken hearted. For him and all who loved him. I wonder in what state he must have been to get to that point, but I don't wonder for too long because I am terrified of going there myself. I am doubly grateful for my friends' and family's support. It's crucial. Yet I still rarely have the energy to pick up the phone and call them. I feel guilty. I hope that they are so busy with their own lives that they don't notice. In the evenings after work, I just want to be left alone with my piano. She rides my moods with me and asks nothing in return. Reading is a joy too. I can escape from my mind into someone else's life, and some days that's a relief.

July 2005 **More sunshine**

A cloud seems to have lifted. I have more energy and I'm being more sociable. I am learning that I don't have to be in a perfect mood 100% of the time because my friends and family will still want to hang out with me. Though I still don't believe that any romantic partner would want me. Not with this flaw in me. Who would want to be with someone who is at risk of going on downers all the time? I'm no fun and I need a lot of sleep.

Who would put up with that?

September 2005 **Holiday away**

I have a new, more challenging job. I was ready for it and I know I can do it well. I no longer analyse every decision I make for possible errors. I realise that there is rarely a 100% correct decision and that is OK. I head Outback for a holiday. The colours, wildlife and complete change of scenery do me good.

December 2005 **My anti-depressant anniversary**

To my surprise, my doctor suggests I stay on the medication for one more year. She says there is a 20-30% chance of relapse if I stop now. I am reluctant. I feel like the medication is holding me back now. I want to have more energy to do more exercise and to stay up later than 10pm! But I understand her viewpoint so I agree to another six months.

I start dating again and figure that I'll just need to find a truly understanding man. Because this 'flaw' may always be a part of me. But now I am accepting it, and myself, for who I am.

And only good can come from that.