

This week I have been trying to think of something to write about. Something good that happened as a result of something bad. I had the idea of writing about what has been going on with my mental health for the last couple of years but I kept putting it off - feeling that I would rather write about something else. I did try and come up with other ideas but I would end up going back and mulling it over again, so I've decided that although my memory isn't the best, I think I can run with it.

A couple of years back - probably about this time in 2019 - my mental health started taking a turn which proved to dominate all of my thoughts. I am trying to remember the very first thing that happened that would be considered as abnormal but I'm finding it hard to pinpoint it exactly. I do have some pages from these times that I wrote in an effort to relieve the mental stress I was under.

I don't have any memory of when this started, but I thought that everyone could read my thoughts, and that everyone was on some secret wavelength of conversation. This secret wavelength has been one of the hardest things to explain when talking to people. I would be listening to a conversation and feel that although people were speaking normally in English, there was also a hidden meaning behind what was being said, which you would have to be aware of to be able to take part in. These underlying meanings would include real intentions, jokes, insults, observations and more - as if this was a big part of life that every grown mind would eventually be aware of. Another plane of communication. Now I am writing about it, I realise that this is probably the first thing that was happening to me leading up to a greater illness. I had been noticing this for maybe 3 years before the rest. This greatly contributed to what I would consider to be the slow decline and death of my character. I couldn't communicate with people because instead of hearing the words that were coming out of their mouths and reacting to that, I would hear these underlying meanings and get shut down, thinking that people were making fun of me for not being able to communicate like them, and me not being able to understand what was really going on. Because of this, I ended up falling out with Gary - a good friend of mine. I accused him of mocking me and encouraging others to join in - citing the underlying meanings I was experiencing and fixating on. Obviously, he never had a clue what I was on about, something I took to be him lying to cover himself. I tried explaining what I heard to other friends but everyone thought I was off my head. I heavily withdraw from being social.

The next thing was believing that everybody knew what I was thinking, and that they were probing and provoking my thoughts by using this secret language. When I say everyone, I mean everyone. I would overhear people talking in the street and they would be talking about me, I would see consistencies between people looking at me and what I was thinking at the time. It even got to the point where I would go on the internet and listen to radio stations from across the world to find out what people actually knew about me. People in America and Australia were talking about me. The news anchor on the tv was talking about me, and talking directly to me. I would go on youtube and watch my favourite musicians playing live gigs, and since that from wherever they were at the time they knew what I was thinking, they would realise that I was watching them play and somehow through that I could communicate with them directly.

I began hallucinating regularly in my daily life. In my mind's eye I seen glimpses of the afterlife, somewhere that seemed so obviously familiar now that I became devoted to spending all of my

attention on. I started speaking to my late grandad regularly, and when a connection was made in a conversation I would see stars or diamond-like lights appear to confirm that we were on the same page. I could see other spirits looking back at me, in the form of an infinite expanse of eyes which made up a greater eye, which I took to be god. What really drove home the belief that what I was seeing was real was that my dreams night would continue the narrative that my waking hallucinations were forming - my grandad would come to me and reassure me, and there has been a few notable instances of lucid dreaming where I was with god.

My hallucinations started to include people I knew in my day to day life - family and friends. I could see them clearly when I closed my eyes, and there was a haze over everything (kind of like looking through heat haze rising from tarmac or water on a hot day) when my eyes were open. After a while of seeing my peers in my minds eye I start to have the belief that maybe they were already there in heaven, and were trying to help me get there. This is where my parents really started to worry - as I had been mostly quiet about everything else, thinking that I couldn't bring up the secret conversations or the fact that people could read my mind as it was never spoken of directly. I started getting very erratic. I would be up in the middle of the night singing for hours - as I felt it was the best way to communicate with people. I would take drugs and go walks all day up in the hills behind my house by myself, talking to family, friends and god. I believed that through listening to musicians on YouTube, I was hatching a plan with them to help me get into heaven to be with everyone else. I left the house at midnight one night, with my passport, fully believing that Eric Clapton was coming to pick me up and take me away. I waited by the side of the road for hours, falling asleep for a bit in a bus stop and continuing my search afterwards by watching live videos on my phone and sending directions through my thoughts so he knew where to pick me up.

It was after that night, having been missing in the morning, that my parents decided that drastic action was to be taken. Basically (to keep my story from going on forever), I ended up in hospital for a couple of months til I had settled down a bit and was on the right meds. For the next 2 years I would still suffer from strong paranoia, hallucinations and intrusive thoughts regularly. This slowly got better, more manageable and less taxing on my thoughts as time went on - I feel better and better each day.

Although I was clearly out of my mind for a good while, I feel it has impacted me positively. I'm now the most clear headed I have been in years and since being in recovery for so long, I have become a lot more chilled out. I don't feel the need to go out every weekend and hammer drink and drugs. I am happy with my own company, and my golf game is coming along nicely... slowly..but nicely all the same. I have been having some good ideas for song writing, though I am a bit lazy when trying to finish things. I have been getting involved with a weekly music group, and also the services at Levensgrove. I feel more comfortable with reaching out to friends, be it to just have a chat or to go out for a walk in the park. And although it was a part of my illness (diagnosed as psychosis, by the way) I feel entirely connected to the universe and God, though I am not sure if god is a being in itself or if god is simply us and the universe. Without a doubt i can say from what I seen that I believe real life only begins after our time here is up. (But I do not align my beliefs with any man-made religion) And though it may not cross most peoples minds very often, being sure of some kind of faith is

greatly positive in the sense that it eradicates fearing the unknown and relieves one of many internal insecurities.

Though my experience has been put down to a mental illness (and successfully treated as one so far) - I don't believe that means what I experience was not real, or was just a product of the illness. From what I seen, I believe that through my illness I truly did catch a glimpse behind the curtain, and that we are all connected as one in the universe. And for me that feels like a massive positive to take from what seemed like an otherwise dire state to be in.