

Happy First Anniversary!
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Depression is a scary word to some, but very common to most. Let's say it together, shall we? Depression... and while you're at it, go ahead and add “generalized anxiety” with it. There we go, the perfect combination for... for failure? That's what you assumed for the first twenty-seven years of your life.

You're strong. You're sixteen, and you monitor everyone's emotions but your own. Those do not matter! You cater to Mom, Grandma, your sister, and heck, even your dad. Be strong! Your little sister began struggling mentally. She became a child guinea pig for a handful of SSRIs in a short amount of time, and sure, some helped for a little while, but then there were the ones that worsened the symptoms. That was very frightening to witness. As you watched her mental health circle the drain, you took a personal oath never to be medicated, no matter how bad things get. You're strong!

August of 2020. Goodbye, Michigan. Hello, Houston, Texas. Your first thought: “Everything is so green.” No friends, no family. Just you, your partner, and your two cats. Who knew you were struggling? You did. Push it down, power through, and ignore it. One year, two years, three years. Wow, Depression has rolled itself into your life like a hurricane rolling in off the Gulf. Can you even recall what you did last week? Probably not, because your brain quietly entered survival mode. You can't work a normal job, you can't regulate your emotions, everything sucks... living sucks.

Dana Hood saved your life. She has been your therapist since you were twenty. Since taking that oath never to be medicated, and dealing with mental illness alone wasn't working, you joined therapy. Prior to moving, you needed her expertise about once a month. Unfortunately, around year two in Houston, your visits became every other week. However, you learned the most in therapy, your favorite thing being "you're not responsible for them, you're responsible to them." In other words, stop monitoring everyone's emotions.

Year four. Therapy has been helpful, but you knew you weren't well. You knew that coming home to your family was what you personally needed to heal. In the summer of 2024, you made the trip across the country to return home. The fall came, and you had finally hit rock bottom. You weren't working, you weren't hanging out with friends, and most days just became one with your king-size bed. It was time, as an adult, you made the necessary decision to finally seek medical professional help, and in November of 2024, you started your medication journey. The start was scary. Would you experience the things your little sister did all those years ago?

Here I am, one year later. For twenty-seven years, I was strong. I survived very dark times. I never let depression or anxiety win. Breaking that oath, a scared sixteen-year-old me made all those years ago, and putting myself first helped me start my college education ten years after graduating high school. I have also formed a stronger relationship with my partner and even myself. But, most importantly, I see a future. That's something I could never envision. I am strong. I am compassionate. I am worthy. Happy one-year anniversary!