



Too Fearful To Sleep

by Gloria Harrison

Like lots of Geminis, I embody the duality of nature. I love to laugh and play and am also full of despair and sadness. I like to read and frustrate myself with politics. I have a dog, Lefty, who is the light of my life. His politics consist of a belief in benevolent dictatorships, as long as he is the dictator. In order to get away from him for at least eight hours a day, I work at the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) North Carolina state office and answer the Helpline. I have taken calls from around the state for 20 years.

My diagnosis is depression with episodes of psychosis. I have also had insomnia for my entire life. I had several bouts of severe depression as a child, including two suicide attempts before the age of 16.

One of my worst days came at the age of 36 when lack of sleep and despair had me locked in the bathroom at 4:00 a.m. I was holding a butcher knife in case demons or burglars or whatever tried to get me. I thought there was no difference in that episode from hiding in the bathroom of the orphanage all night as a child, too fearful to sleep. That thought prompted me to completely give up on life.

I was always told that I was difficult to love because I was so isolated and took myself too seriously. However, after starting on medication, I actually came out of my depression enough to realize that it wasn't all my terrible "nature." It was a treatable illness.

I have been on antidepressants for 25 years, and so far, my liver is still talking to me. I attended group support meetings for 15 years and still participate in other kinds of support, including using the Internet. I have been happily married for 10 years. Of course, we have been married for 37 years.