

Mike's story

**“How I overcame depression, bipolar, OCD,
anxiety and other issues without drugs”**

written by
Michael Carlos Simon

co-authored by
Roland Trujillo



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With a special postscript by Roland
Trujillo

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This book is dedicated to Dr. Phillip Breggin, who has worked tirelessly to warn people about the side effects and dangers of psychoactive drugs. He also has worked hard for the humane treatment of psychiatric patients. He has a lot of love and dared to speak out when he was a voice crying in the wilderness

IMPORTANT ADVISORY

"Most psychiatric drugs can cause withdrawal reactions, sometimes including life-threatening emotional and physical withdrawal problems. In short, it is not only dangerous to start taking psychiatric drugs, it can also be dangerous to stop them. Withdrawal from psychiatric drugs should be done carefully under experienced clinical supervision."

Warning posted by Dr. Peter Breggin

If you are experiencing an emergency, if you or someone in your household is in danger, or if you are having thoughts of hurting yourself or others, please call your local or national mental health crisis hotline, your medical doctor or 911 to receive immediate attention. You may call 1-800- 273-TALK or 1-800-273-8255 to be connected to the nearest crisis hotline. If you are not in the United States look here for help www.befrienders.org. You are not alone. People are standing by to help you.

DISCLAIMER The authors are not doctors. The co-author is a pastor and spiritual care giver. The information provided here is for educational and informational purposes only. In no way should it be considered as offering medical advice. Doing anything suggested or recommended in this book must be done at your own risk. Please check with a physician if you suspect you are ill. The information contained is not intended for medical advice. You should always discuss any medical treatment with your Health Care Provider or mental health practitioner.

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Forward

My name is Roland Trujillo. I am a pastor and spiritual care giver. I have a radio program and some blogs where I provide education and information about letting go of baggage from the past, finding confidence, learning to be more forgiving with people, and optimizing life experience.

My dear friend Mike and I are co-authoring a recovery self help book. It is Mike's personal testimony, but I am helping put it in book form. In a nutshell, Mike overcame several issues without therapy or meds.

He is symptom free and leads a full productive life.

Mike wrote me a letter about his recovery. I was so impressed that asked him if I could post it on one of my blogs. I knew that it would inspire and help others.

He agreed. Soon one letter became two. Each letter became a new installment. And now that we are up to installment 14, it's time to make it into a book.

The full title of Chapter one is:

How to Find Confidence. A Letter from Michael, Who Overcame Anxiety, Bipolar, OCD, Depression and Shyness.

It is written by someone who gets it. He overcame depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder and more without therapy or meds.

He is not claiming that his walk will work for everyone. He is just sharing his story.

Mike is opinionated, but nowadays the bookstores are full of books where people tell about their lives. So Mike has as much right to tell his story and voice his opinions as anyone else. Besides, he's been there; done that.

We cheer when the singer wins the talent show or Rocky Balboa wins the fight.

Here's a regular guy who triumphed and left all his issues behind. Mike is an inspiration. Bravo. All we can say is "Thanks, Mike."

have anxiety? Of course. Did I get depressed? Of course.

When my parents got divorced, it bothered me. When my dad died, it made me sad. When my parakeet died, I felt bad. What was I supposed to do, be happy about these things? I grieved and felt hurt, and then I got over it.

When I was a little kid, did I go through a period of time when I had to do a compulsive ritual of counting numbers or arranging my shoes perfectly at night or else "something really bad would happen?" Of course.

Then I grew out of it.

When I was in college, was I high and hyper when something good happened, staying up till dawn talking excitedly to my friends? Of course. Then when things didn't go well, the girl didn't answer my phone calls, and our team lost the big game, did I get bummed out and depressed and have really negative thoughts?

Naturally.

When I was in my 20's, did I wonder who I was and if there was a future for me? Did I mess up, and make lots of mistakes? Sure. And then did voices try to tell me I was "worthless, a loser, and that the world would be better off without me, so I should do away with myself?" Of course.

When I was 30 and sitting in a lonely apartment in the outskirts of Chicago, with the snow coming down and nowhere to go and wishing I were back in California, did I feel depressed? Of course. But here I am. I got through.

My recovery had two parts. First it was just growing out of issues. Secondly, it was a spiritual awakening when I was around 39.

I think that the fact that kids often outgrow issues is not given enough credit. It seems like each stage of our life--little kid, big kid, teenager, college age, 20's, 30's--

there are some typical issues to deal with. The old expression "time heals all wounds" definitely applies.

That's how it was for me. Somehow I just grew out of things.

Like when I was a kid, teen, and in my 20's I was painfully shy. But then when I was in my 30's I was teaching college classes and now I feel comfortable around everyone and talk about anything. Okay, so it took a few years to get over it. But I did get over it.

As we grow, we mature; we leave behind the things of childhood--including issues. We move on. It's a long process and it's called life.

There is a term in psychotherapy call normalizing. It means helping a person see that some anxiety (or whatever that they are going through) is what a lot of people experience.

Some people think that if they are anxious, hear voices, have obsessive thoughts, or have compulsions, they are the only person in the whole world with this issue. It's a relief to find out that lots of people have the same issues and lots of people get better.

I'm extending my hand in friendship to talk about some of the things I have been blessed to learn along the way in my spiritual walk. Now I can truly say (having experienced it): "this too shall pass."

Now I understand what James meant when he said:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:2 and 3 (English Standard version).

Do you see it? Do you see that we must not avoid life or the circumstances where we failed?

Learn to stand back and overlook, and now these situations will become the ground for the development of character and by which you can undo the past.

Let me just say right here that the spiritual meditation to calm down that Roland offers free was a big help to me. I highly recommend it, since it assists in calming down and in finding objectivity--so as to be able to stand back and observe thoughts and emotions without over reacting to what you see.

I'll tell you about it in Chapter 2.

Roland's comments:

Thanks, Mike! Your letter is inspirational. I would like to mention something about awareness, one of my favorite subjects. You found the meditation useful because it helped you become objective, so you could look at your issues, feelings and thoughts impassively.

It worked for you because you wanted to be aware. Until a person is ready, he or she will try to avoid awareness (because of the pain it brings when we see our own wrong). You see, once we fail and deal poorly with some situation, we don't want to see that we failed. So we tend to retreat into the imagination and make excuses.

By doing so, we cut ourselves off from full open eyed awareness (which is what we need to face situations with intuition and understanding). So, at the first sighting of stress we escape from awareness, and then we fail again. That's why we tend to keep doing the same error over and over with the same people or look alike people.

For example, we may have resented our overbearing mom, become rebellious and angry, and as we go through life we keep meeting people like our mom, to

whom we react the same old way (resentfully, rebelliously and angrily). When awareness comes back and we are forced to see that we failed again, we reach for distractions to escape into like work or study, music, marijuana, alcohol, or pills to take away the one thing that would help us face the next moment well: awareness.

Now here is the beautiful part. The way you respond to an issue can change the very next time you encounter it. All you need is the missing ingredient. That missing ingredient is awareness (coupled with a willingness to see the truth).

The very next time you face the issue (or situation) but this time *with awareness*, it will be all different. Awareness gives you the power to stand back, see it objectively, and respond intuitively.

One man, who had a 20 year nicotine addiction, began to meditate and he found the objective state of awareness. One day he picked up his cigarette and took a puff with awareness, and he never smoked again.

His cigarettes gave him up because he was no longer compatible with them. Before he had used the sensations and the stress of the effects of nicotine to lower awareness and help him escape from what he wasn't ready to see.

Now he was ready to face reality, and it just took one smoke with awareness for him to see that he no longer had a need for smoking.

Remember, most of us spend our lives facing everything without awareness because of our habit of escaping awareness. So the obvious question becomes: how do we find and hold onto awareness?

That is where the meditation (coupled with the attitude of wanting to be aware) comes in.

Roland

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How I Overcame Childhood Issues and Became a Regular Guy

Roland, thank you for putting my letter on your blog. I believe it will be of help to people. Here is Part Two.

In my previous letter, I recounted how I had all kinds of issues (including others I didn't even mention, such as being morbidly obese when I was 16 years old) from the time I was a little kid, an older kid, a tween, a teen, a young adult, and then into my late 30's.

The point I was trying to make is that I somehow overcame them through growing out of them. The obsessions and compulsions I had as a kid sort of diminished and went away by the time I was a teen, for example. To me, each stage of my life had issues that appeared, caused me pain and some torment, but went away as I grew older.

It was amazing and heartening, really. Dr. Courtenay Harding has often spoken about how resilient and resourceful people are. Pathologizing, drugging, medicating, and basically teaching people that they have a "brain disorder" and to get used to living a life as a victim with diminished hopes and expectations and that they will have to stay on medication forever is hardly a hopeful, robust, joyous, optimistic approach to life.

I was resilient (though I didn't know it). Somehow (and I think God helped me in this regard) I was steered away from the type of help that would have turned me into a permanent victim.

Have you ever heard the old Zen Buddhist saying "when the student is ready, the teacher will appear?" It sounds nice, but I can't really say that I believed it. But now I think it is probably true, because something similar, though somewhat different, happened in my life.

Each step of the way, someone was there who kept me from going off the deep end, gave me hope, and stabilized me. When I was getting in with the wrong crowd, my mom and step dad sent me to parochial school (even though we were not Catholic). There was discipline and academic standards.

But more than anything, there were some teachers that were there for me: as role models and because they cared. Two were priests and two were young guys who were just starting as teachers.

My step dad came along and really stabilized things at home. He was a good role model too. When he had a big heart attack, he changed his lifestyle and took off 50 lbs. (and kept the weight off). Somehow, the very next summer, I lost 50 to 60 lbs. too (when I was 17) and kept it off. I know he set the pace for me. In my mind I said "if he can do it, I can do."

When I was in my 20 and 30's I had a couple of great bosses. They ever so gently but persistently helped me grow up, mainly by simply modeling what a together person is like. When at one point I was really depressed, I was somehow able to drag myself to one junior college class.

One class, one night a week was all I could handle. But the teacher was great, and going to that one class broke the cycle and got me started doing things again.

I entered a college degree program, and there were a couple of great teachers there too. After that it was onward and upward.

So it was certain individual people, their presence or even their personal stories--not drugs, therapy, groups or programs--that helped get me through. And not many. Just one person here and another one there each step of the way, who were there to give me hope, serve as role models, and got me through a tough period.

There was also some philosophical support: some writers, poets, philosophers along the way whose books and articles kept me going. I never met them personally, but their writings were there for me. I'll just name a few: Eric Hoffer, Alexandre Solzhenitsyn, Santayana, and Lin Yutang.

When I was a kid, and I was being put down and teased, I turned to books and sports. The Wizard of Oz series (many people don't know that there are several Oz books--all good), dog stories, comic books, and baseball cards.

They gave me hope of someday overcoming issues, they made me feel normal, and they were something I could secretly enjoy just by myself (without someone ruining it or taking it away from me when they found out I liked it).

When I was in my 30's, there were a couple of speakers too (who I watched on video or listened to

their tapes) like Leo Buscaglia, John Bradshaw and Zig Ziglar. These names may not mean anything to you.

You've got to find your own favorite writers and speakers. In other words, don't overlook the library as a place for solace and inspiration.

I notice another reason why I may have gotten better. The help I received was from people who were there for a short time and then gone (a writer, a teacher, a boss, or even a guy on the radio). That way I didn't become dependent on them.

They weren't close or even supportive. Just there long enough to help out, and then they were gone. The help was a temporary helping hand. No strings attached.

A partner, a boyfriend or girlfriend, an organized group or a church, therapy or a drug can be sticky, intrusive, enmeshing, and create dependency. A partner or a drug may have side effects. A church or other group can pull you in and create a bunch of love/hate, dependency issues.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't have a partner. Nor am I saying that a church, support group, or other helping organization can't be there for you. I'm just saying that our inner life and well being should not become dependent on some person or group.

Help from others should be like a hospital to go into to recover. It's not a place to stay forever. I have seen a lot of people become dependent on their program, support group, drug, or church--and never achieve independence or wholeness.

Fortunately my helpers were not too close. They weren't even trying to help me. They were just there.

Another thing that helped me personally was that I had time, lots of time, to ponder, read, go for walks, exercise, listen to talk radio, write and basically take time to seek the purpose in life and gently find my way.

I had jobs that either gave me a lot of freedom or else were not taxing and stressful. It left time and energy for introspection and learning.

So somehow I got through. I remained employed, had some good jobs, had some friends of both sexes, and made it through without being labeled with something. I didn't even know I had "ADHD, OCD, major depression, or bipolar disorder."

Now when I read the latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, watch people's mental health sagas on YouTube or read psychiatric literature, I see that once upon a time I had the symptoms without the label. If I had been labeled, I probably wouldn't have made it through.

By the time I was 39 years old, the childhood ADHD, obsessions and compulsions, then the shyness, obesity, depression and bipolar were things of the past. I was now just a regular guy, still smoking nicotine pretty heavily (but no alcohol or marijuana). Though I would soon stop smoking for good.

I still hadn't found the answers to life's burning questions: like why am I here, does God care, who am I, what is my purpose in life, and so on. But I was all grown up and just a regular guy.

I was now getting ready for the life transforming change that would begin the second half of life. The first 40 years were for having some fun, having some ups and downs, growing up, making some mistakes and muddling through. Now it was time to begin the spiritual part of life.

Roland's comment: Again, thanks Mike. It takes a lot of courage to reveal so much about yourself. But I know it will be of help to others. Incidentally, I want to mention on Mike's behalf that he hasn't smoked in 20 years. I look forward to Part Three

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How I Overcame Emotional Abuse and Trauma

This is installment 8 of Mike's story

Hello, everyone. My name is Mike and this is my story.

Actually it is the story of every man and every woman. The circumstances are different, but the way in which we came to lose our true self, joy and a life of adventure is similar from person to person. The only difference between people is that some keep going back to the same ol' same ol'--whereas for others of us, thank goodness--suffering makes us cry out and search for true answers.

Here's part 8 of my story.

If something could take away doubt, fear and anxiety, wouldn't you be better off? And by extension, it would

also take away worry. Then how about the horrible sense of mistrust and anxiety about what others are planning to do?

Many a child has suddenly had his parents announce they were getting a divorce, or that "we're sending you away for your own good" to a ranch for troublemakers, or taking you to a psychiatrist. Even as an adult, 50 years later, the fundamental distrust and anxiety, born of childhood experiences, keeps coming back.

But how about if you knew you were loved, and that there was someone who cared about you as a person and would never let you down? Then how about if you no longer had to worry, fret, plan and scheme for the future?

What if you could be like a kid on an amusement ride at Disneyland or Knotts Berry Farm? It was going to be a fun ride, maybe even a little scary, but you could just sit back and relax and enjoy it because you knew you were safe.

How about if life were like sitting in the observation car of one of America's fine passenger trains around 1960. You could just relax, enjoy the sights and the beauty of America and enjoy the ride. When you were a little child, if your home was safe and your parents decent, you actually enjoyed something like what is described above. Each day was a wonderful discovery.

You didn't know what was coming, but whatever it was, you knew that mom and dad would be there, and you were fearless and looked forward to new adventures. In other words you tasted of a blessed state of mind when you were a little child before you were emotionalized, terrorized and traumatized. Now you must re-find that blessed state.

It exists in the here and now, and it awaits the child of God ready to begin returning to the Father we have never known.

We were not created to live in fear and doubt. We were created to live in a paradise right here on earth. We were meant to walk with God, as is said of some of the ancient prophets, and to live a life of joyous discovery of God's great green earth and of His handiwork. We were meant to come to know Him.

You were created for a purpose you are yet to discover. Before delving in more of what happened to you that destabilized you and took you away from your pre-ordained purpose, let me share something beautiful with you. We were created to know God and discover of Him.

First we were meant to discover and find delight in God's creation, whereby we know and live in awe of His creative genius. But to learn of God means to also learn of His mercy, loving-kindness, and patience.

Here is the beautiful thing I want to share with you. You have learned of human cruelty and deceitfulness, because you have experienced it firsthand. You have learned of treachery, cruelty, viciousness, and abuse. You have learned of the hardness of heart of others, and of the heartlessness and arbitrariness of authority.

You have also learned of the falsity, emptiness and destructiveness of much of so-called "help." You have tried education, knowledge, drugs, therapy, organized religion and spirituality, rituals, groups, and other varieties of human help.

Though some of these helpers were sincere or meant well, it was often misguided, misdiagnosed, or palliative. At best it was a temporary helping hand, but something was still missing. But there is a value in all of this: Suffering.

It was only through suffering that you began to question the way you were going.

And it was only by trying all the help out there, and then continuing to suffer or become dependent and

debilitated, that you came to see that there is no love or understanding out there.

In other words, suffering softened your pride and made you amenable to take a good hard look at yourself. And the false help of others soured you on worldly love and made you yearn for real love and healthy independence.

At this point in its suffering, the soul is softened and is in a state of questioning. God answers the silent cry of the soul, and the first touch of His help is objectivity.

The soul is raised out of the morass of thinking and emotions, up to where it is able to see in the clear light of reality the way things really are.

And the first things that the soul will see are its own wrongs, especially resentment of others, pride and willfulness. It will see its own secret judgmental nature and how it has become cruel and phony, just like the ones it had hated. Being pained by and regretting what it sees about itself, the soul is repented in the Light.

The person will also see the world the way it is: with people everywhere struggling and sinking in confusion and a snake pit of judging and being judged, deceiving and being deceived, using and being used. Everywhere there is treachery and confusion. There is very little understanding or love out there; mostly use and abuse, and people finding ways of denying their own wrong.

Seeing all of this, the soul is disabused of its illusions and shriven of its belief and dependency on human help. Now the person is readied to start afresh, humbled, contrite, and ready to do things God's way instead of its old willful resentful way.

Now the person has a restored rapport with intuition (which it used to know as conscience) now its constant companion. This intuition is always there like a pleasant strain of music. It provides present-sight and foresight.

For each moment, the person sees just enough to move rightly and avoid the wrong move. It also provides hindsight (in the form of being secretly made aware of one's own prior error), so that you can be sorry for it and then see and understand where you went wrong.

Now experiencing the touch of God, the person knows for sure that God exists. The person knows for sure that he or she had been wrong and is incapable of being right. Now the person looks to God for guidance and welcomes that help.

Now can you see the beautiful thing?

By having suffered, the soul is softened to receive grace. By hating, judging, and being stubborn, and then doubting and denying God, a person becomes very wrong. And when the soul is repentant and sorry, it then experiences God's mercy and forgiveness. By having one's life restored and by being given the time for a second chance to now handle properly what one once mishandled, the person experiences the patience and loving-kindness of God.

Moreover, being familiar with being hated or falsely loved, the person now more appreciates true love when God extends it. Having been very wrong and having made a big mess out of everything, the person is now grateful to be extended grace and see his or her life made right. Love, mercy, kindness, patience are much more appreciated.

Not only that, but when you experience the touch of God and know that He is ever nigh, there is nothing that could be more comforting to the soul. Plus, now there is hope and a bright future--not one you have to give yourself or huff and puff and scheme for--but one that comes about naturally and with ever new delights and surprises, because of God's love and providence.

will learn how to be a coworker, partner or parent without being so close emotionally. It reminds you to remain somewhat detached and to observe people's errors or wrongs without resenting or hating them.

Thus, you will be more composed and calm as you go through life. Being less emotional, more patient, and less involved, you will not have all the external garbage leak in.

When you react emotionally (or resent), the outside get on the inside. From its new home in you it then torments you and takes away your ease. Being calmer, you simply take in less of the scene.

You will discover that if you meet the moment properly, there is simply nothing of it that sticks.

Nothing of it gets inside and then keeps calling for review or changing. It is only when we meet the moment improperly (with resentment or excitement) that it leaves baggage in our mind.

A day well lived and moments well met will leave nothing to bother you.

Presently, you go through life getting upset and resentful, and reacting to other's temptations and demands emotionally. It gets inside and then sticks in your craw. You must discover that it is simply not necessary to get emotionally worked up over things.

You can work and enjoy recreation without emotional hype. You can relate to people better when you are not so emotional, upset or angry. It is possible and preferable to enjoy a modest satisfaction from your work, enjoy your partner and kids, and enjoy a modest pleasure and joy in recreation.

When you begin to meditate properly, you will find objectivity. You will stand back and observe people, circumstances and thoughts objectively. In this objective state (instead of the subjective egotistical one), you will be amenable to sound instruction.

You will begin to see the benefit of forgiving, of being patient, of discerning instead of judging, and of living intuitively, seeking to do what is right instead of what is selfish. You will observe that you will now have these sound instructions coming to mind during the day, as you go about your business, and you will be able to live them more and more. There are many benefits of the proper meditation.

You will become more and more your own person, and increasingly calm and composed.

And should you occasionally mess up and become resentful or upset, you will be able to stand back and observe the remnants in the form of images, replays, and emotions. Though they are troubling and unpleasant, you will be able to remain distant to them until they run their course and dwindle down. You will have learned a lesson--why you should not become upset or resentful.

Can you see that although resting the body, exercising, going for walks, not always being connected and so on are very good advice, you also need to take it to the next level?

The next level is learning the simple art of disconnecting from thought and learning to disconnect from the emotions and passions that chain you into sticky relationships, unhealthy emotions, and incessant mental chatter and a parade of images.

The soul which learns how to be fair, calm and patient with others, and the soul that remains aware (instead of lost in pipe dreams) will meet life properly and have no residue at the end of the day to deal with.

Treat your body right. Eat well. Enjoy some R and R, and learn to meditate.

Hey, it worked for me.

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How I Overcame Childhood Trauma

Here is installment 10 of Mike's wonderful story. It's the story of someone who overcame obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, social phobia, obesity, and nicotine addiction.

We have always loved stories of people who overcame adversity, like in the movie *Rocky*. We like stories of people who raised themselves from failure to success, like the old Horatio Alger story. We like to watch people rise from obscurity to fame on Star Search, American Idol or like Susan Boyle on Britain's Got Talent.

We love to see regular people, like ourselves, succeed.

Well, here is a story that should be inspiring to a huge number of people who have issues that are more internal and less obvious. A guy who is broke or in jail or a lady who shoplifts have their issues more out in the open.

But as Henry David Thoreau said: Most people lead lives of quiet desperation. The voices, the torment, the depression, the anxiety, the doubts, the self condemnation and self loathing, the loneliness, and the lovelessness are very real to the person who has them, but are not out there for everyone to see. It's more of a private and internal struggle.

If a person were to overcome some or all of these, as in fact, quite a few have, it would be a major victory and a success story to celebrate. Mike did, and here is his story. Mike is very opinionated. But he has a right to his opinions. He salt and peppers his story with social commentary, but isn't that what writers have always done? Thanks for your courage, Mike.

Roland

Hello, everyone. My name is Mike and I would like to talk about childhood trauma.

First I want to say that I was fortunate. I had my traumas and my issues, but people left me alone and I did not compound the traumas. Quite a few people are traumatized as a child and then have trauma added to trauma: they are put in some terrible foster care environment, or they are subjected to what Dr. Peter Breggin calls "brain disabling treatments," such as psychotropic meds, ECT or lobotomy. Trauma is added to trauma.

Perhaps they are incarcerated and put in a setting where they are violated again. They may escape from a rotten home to a gang, where they are violated. They might seek escape from an abusive home and seek love in a marriage or relationship where they are again abused.

A young person may seek to earn a living and get away from an unhappy home by joining the military, only to see and experience awful things in some strange place thousands of miles away.

Traumatized and shocked, he or she may be given polypharmacy, and by overdoses or interaction undergo yet further shock.

In short, other human beings keep doing things to them which in the guise of helping them only adds layer upon layer of trauma.

And I must also mention that a person may join a religious or spiritual group for help only to be taken advantage of and used; or perhaps worse yet, find out that it is full of hypocrisy and falsity instead of real love and truth. This leads to the devastation of doubt and cynicism and resentment. More trauma of the deepest and most spiritual variety.

Some of you will say that such a person just had bad luck. But if he or she had been surrounded by loving, kind and understanding people, the bad things would not have happened.

Like I said, I was fortunate to be left alone. I found some good work, went to college, and found plenty of time to read, do sports, have friends, and do lots of reading. I explored the bookstores of San Francisco, experienced life, and outgrew my childhood issues.

When I needed help (such as when I needed to have my tonsils taken out when I was in my twenties), I found a kind and skilled doctor and a great hospital staff. Nothing bad happened.

I got through with the help of a few good teachers, a couple of great bosses, two good doctors, and lots and lots of good books. And yes, my parents were decent.

But my unloved mother (God bless her soul) did lay some trips on me and did a lot of damage. My dad had some issues, but he was a nice man. It's too bad that his

- 11 -

Mike Describes His Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Symptoms and How He Overcame Them

*This is installment 11 of Mike's story. Mike describes his experiences in his own words and then asks for my comments.
Roland*

Hi, my name is Mike. In an earlier chapter of my story, I related that when I was a kid I suffered from obsessive compulsive disorder. I said that I basically outgrew the obvious symptoms. And I mentioned this fact early in my story because I believe that many people have these types of issues. I wanted to give people some hope and encouragement.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. I didn't go to therapy or anything. I didn't take any medication. I didn't really do anything, other than experience the symptoms and as time went by, they diminished.

It's like--one time when I was in college, I tried to lift my motorcycle over a car that had it blocked in a storage area. Not a good idea! I strained my back. It felt quite really bad for about a month. I couldn't even bend over. It gradually got better though. Within two or three months it was gone. This was 40 years ago. Well, the same with the symptoms of OCD that I had when I was a kid.

Most of them just diminished as I grew up. I sort of waited them out. The first one to go was having to straighten things and put them in a certain way. Another compulsion that went away was having to do some little ritual to take away something bad that might happen because I had a bad thought.

There was also a ritual I had to do for no particular reason except I felt I had to do it. All these diminished and went away when I was a teen.

But it has become apparent to me that other obsessive thoughts are far more subtle. They diminished in intensity and most had gone away, but some of them hung around into adulthood. Some were very vague and subtle. Others were there only occasionally, but when they were there, they were very strong. I will mention a couple of them just to give you an example of what I mean.

When I began meditating some 20 years ago, almost all of the lingering obsessive thoughts quickly went away or diminished. A few hung around a long time, and even today occasionally approach--but now I have learned to stand back and watch them, and they can't get away with anything. But I want to mention these thoughts anyway, even though they are mostly a thing

of the past, because I think it may be of help to some people to know they are not alone--I want them to know that others have similar or the same type of thoughts bothering them--and that someone has gotten beyond them successfully. So here goes.

First I will mention the ones that were only there occasionally (rarely), but when they are there, they were very strong.

One of them strikes when I hear the Bible verse that relates that Jesus said "Ask anything in my name and it will be granted." Immediately something wants to compel me to ask for something very, very wrong. It is a pressure and I think there must be some inner verbalizing, because what it wants me to ask for is said in words. I separate from it, and I drum up some sort of resolve to quickly dismiss it and not ruminate on it. I don't fight it or argue with it.

Somehow I become aware of it and it is dismissed.

Another one that only arises very rarely is when I hear the Bible verse that says that any sin will be forgiven, except one type of blasphemy will not be forgiven.

Suddenly an inner voice says a bad swear word in a phrase having to do with this type of blasphemy. Again, I found an inner resolve to have nothing to do with it.

It goes away.

Plus I can clearly see that it is not me that is thinking this thought. So I don't feel guilty about it. I just separate from it and don't interact with it.

Now I will mention some of the more subtle ones that I never really knew were "obsessions" until I read a book written by a psychiatrist, entitled *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing*.

In my case, these have been mostly various forms of doubt and self doubt. Something like going on vacation and then, 200 miles from home, suddenly wondering if you might have left the stove on. Then dwelling on this

thought, with anxiety for quite a while. In my case, it was like driving past a group of people and then wondering if I hit one of them with the car.

Then came thinking about it with anxiety. Another example is going through an intersection with a red light camera and then wondering if I went through a red light. Many of these doubts are torments having to do with being accused of something, or fearing and fretting over having done something wrong by mistake.

It's interesting that these types of silly little doubts are a bigger form of pressure than the religious, blasphemous or foul thoughts. The religious ones are so ominous that they are no longer credible.

I see that they are trying to scare me or make me think I've committed the unpardonable sin. Or they are trying to tempt me to tempt God. In other words, they are trying to tempt me to do or think something wrong to see if I will get in trouble. It's like a rotten kid daring another one to do something wrong. Now I see what they are up to and just dismiss them. The answer is to just not play the game.

But I think the ones that are more mundane are more painful and tormenting because they tempt our ego to get upset and try to deal with them. For example, it's like when you get a letter on Friday afternoon that says you didn't pay the utility bill so it is going to be turned off with a big reconnection fee. You know you *did* pay the bill, so it's a mistake. But you have to wait all weekend until Monday morning to try to clear it up.

The issue itself is not so bad, but the emotions of fear, anger, resentment, a sense of urgency, and even doubt (did my check bounce, etc.) are what cause it to be strong. So now I have learned and am continuing to learn not to react emotionally to anything--a bill, a letter, a phone call, a dent on my car, or an obsessive thought--because the emotions cause a feeling of

Mike's story

“How I overcame depression, bipolar, OCD, anxiety and other issues without drugs.”

Mike's Story is the powerful personal testimony of someone who overcame mental health and other issues and went on to enjoy a successful, productive life. Mike tells you about his childhood: the traumas, the obsessions and compulsions, his shyness and bipolar. Mike tells you about his twenties: the depression, the doubts and the fears. You will hear him talk about how Zorro and Columbo helped him get through. You'll find out what the Zen Master said. You'll read about Mike's close call with Dr. Rough Handling. Mike loves to philosophize about life, love, and he likes Frank Sinatra too. For each stage of his life he reveals how he moved on and left the issues behind. Mike saves the best for last: How he found his spiritual roots with the help of meditation, a change of heart, a hug and a kick in the pants from God.

Roland Trujillo, pastor, mentor and spiritual director, is the author of 12 books. His popular self help radio program has aired on both secular and Christian radio stations around the country for 22 years. “I love helping people improve their relationships, overcome personal issues and find their spiritual roots. People get stuck, and they need someone who thinks outside the box to help them look at life with fresh eyes. People are resilient and can make progress in a very short amount of time. Sometimes all it takes is an insight or two, a little meditation to get centered, and knowing that there is someone who has love, and who both understands and can help. That's all.