

# So You're New to PSSD? A Personal Testimony of Coping and Perseverance

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## Editorial

One of the things that became apparent to me early in my struggle with PSSD is that there are no promises of recovery. Worse, it often appears statistically likely that it won't go away: that it's permanent.

The uncertainty for the future might be the worst part of PSSD. Before PSSD, I had led a normal and active sex life, was successful in school, and was relatively happy. That doesn't mean that everything was ok, however, and I struggled with extreme anxiety over going to college in the coming months. I had always envisioned starting a family afterwards. It was just something that seemed part of my plan. PSSD changed the course of that plan overnight. I was no longer sure of how to talk to, date, or marry the right girl when I met her. The emotional toll of PSSD left me extremely unstable for over a year. This was during my freshman year of college, and seeing so many of my new friends succeed made me even more discouraged. Would I ever be normal again?

PSSD forced me to grow up. I think it forces most everyone who gets it in adolescence to. If there is some advantage that PSSD gave me, it's that it given me drive in life, and allowed me to fall in love with helping other people. PSSD forced me to think about other people: what they go through, what makes them happy, and what keeps them up at night.

PSSD has made me restless. Relentless. I search for purpose in every waking hour, and work harder than I ever did before. People in the early stages of PSSD often ask me if I've gone back to normal. My answer to them: NO! How could I? PSSD changed my view of the world so fundamentally that even if my sexually miraculously recovered tomorrow, I'd never be the same person who took Lexapro in the fall of 2014. Sexuality is no longer something that I view as functional or dysfunctional. Instead, it's an immensely intricate abyss that is fluid throughout one's life.

My first piece of advice to those on the first steps of their PSSD journey is to keep hope. Hope that PSSD will resolve, but even more hope that they can grow to be happy again. Millions of people are miserable even without PSSD (that's why antidepressants are even around in the first place), and I know plenty of people with PSSD who lead happy and fulfilling lives. If you make happiness contingent of the status of your PSSD, you might never find it again. That doesn't mean that it comes easy, or that the path is

always clear. It simply means that regardless of what happened yesterday, nothing done today can ever change the past. This is most important on the days when you feel that nothing is left.

My next piece of advice is to stop reading the sob stories. There are many of them. Marriages ruined. Lives destroyed. Careers ended. STOP. Stop. It is addicting when you first get PSSD. It was for me at least. Even earlier today I got caught up reading a few of them, but I am now careful to catch myself before they can send me spiraling into an abyss of worry and defeat. If I've learned anything from PSSD, it's that nothing in life is truly certain besides birth and death. Everything in-between is a mystery. Don't fill yourself with absolutes and stories written from unknown people from around the world. They are not you. They do not define you or your experience with PSSD.

Finally, don't let PSSD stop you from living your life. I say that for the days when it's easier, but especially for the days when it's hard. Run blindly into the unknown, and do not fear it. If you do fail, you will do so knowing that you've tried. If you are unsure if you should ask the cute girl at the party for her number: do it. Do it fearlessly. Do it unapologetically. You are you no matter what has happened from an SSRI. Try everything. Love everyone. Hope everyday.