



Living with schizophrenia is very hard.

Sometimes I just can't face the day.

People take for granted so many things about their life, like the state of mind they'll be in when they wake up. I go to bed most nights not knowing if I'll wake up happy or depressed. These changes in my mood are exhausting. The medication makes me feel so slow and groggy in the morning that appointments, classes and friendships are impossible.

Schizophrenia has been cruel to our family. My father and brother escaped its grip, but both mum and I live with its ups and downs. We love and understand each other and through everything, we're always there for one another.

I was barely a teenager when schizophrenia struck. From that day life hasn't been fair. I heard voices that were cruel and nasty. I'd get things wrong all the time and believed things about people and the world around me that weren't true. People take for granted that they can do whatever they like in life, but schizophrenia destroys your goals - like mine of working with horses. It robs you of your personality and completely destroys your memory.

It was not until I was nearly 30 that I was diagnosed with the disorder, meaning I endured more than a decade of unnecessary pain, heartache and sadness. To this day, I remember very little of my life to middle age.

It's good to stay busy when you live with schizophrenia. Being bored at home is the worst thing, and people take for granted the ability to work. I get a sense of achievement when I'm out and about and completing tasks. I take a sewing class (the photo is me, mum and one of my creations) and am learning Spanish. I also volunteer at a local community TV station and go to a painting class.

I try really hard to look after myself. People think that you have a split personality, but that is absolutely not what schizophrenia is. Schizophrenia deliberately distorts who you can trust and how you think, but thanks to support from my family and doctors, I've had a period of good health. I still hear voices, but I'm getting better at knowing this is just part of the illness, and that they can't hurt me.

The medication also helps, but life is still very hard. I am lucky - nearly 30% of people living with the disorder aren't helped by medication.

NeuRA asked me what I would say to encourage someone to support schizophrenia research. My answer is this - imagine if it was your son or daughter. It changes your life and you'd want it to be stopped - but the best we can do now is treat some of the symptoms and that only works for some people.

NeuRA is working to find big improvements in treatments and to STOP schizophrenia, but they need your help to support research.

Thanks for reading and caring,

Tracey