

You Have a Path and a Purpose
By: Beth Shelby

It's been 30 years since my journey began. I felt compelled to share, now having 2 teenagers of my own, and watching them lose friends to suicide. I am a wife, mom of 2, a marathon runner and I'm a survivor.

My story begins at the age of 13. I had already moved around to several schools in 2 different states due to my dad getting work. This was my 5th school. I had friends, a supportive and loving family but for me it was a gradual cloud that began to form over me. I turned to being the class clown and trying to make others feel good and laugh. On the inside I felt hopeless and lost. I would come home after school and I just felt like sleeping. I was exhausted. Tears filled my eyes most nights and I lost interest in everything. Suddenly being the funny one and trying to keep others happy, passed and anger and bad thoughts moved in.

After a week I couldn't get the thoughts and planning out of my head. I slipped a note to a friend in our history class telling her of my plans. I saw her face drain when she read it but she managed a smile and an "everything is going to be alright" look. Little did I know that right after class she took my note to the counselor. The next day I was admitted into an inpatient facility where I would live for the next 2 months where I was diagnosed with major depression. I then began a journey with a dozen other teens. Gang members, drug addicts, and other depressed individuals like me. Most of them had seen more in their life than most would ever see in their entire lives. We all began the healing process. I attended many classes a day all geared towards recovery. Art therapy was my favorite. We would get to listen to a radio and hear all the new hits while painting pottery. Over the next few months my parents would come and visit and would also participate in family psychotherapy. I felt strong and confident. I became president of the adolescent unit which was a very coveted position appointed by the staff. Leaving the hospital I felt empowered and ready to take on anything. Unfortunately leaving such a safe place and going back into JR High School, I started to feel that cloud come again. I tried to remember what my doctors had said, all of the advice, but I couldn't get the cloud to leave. I was once again down in a dark hole although I knew I was loved and hands were trying to save me. That night I attempted to end it all again. The night was a blur but I remember my mom holding me tight. I again went back to school and a friend came up to me and said something along the lines of, life will go on. We will miss you and mourn you, but at one point you will just be a memory. That was my Aha moment. My healing moment. I didn't want to be a memory. I

wanted to build memories. I do have a purpose and I wasn't going to let this disease take this from me. No my life didn't get any easier. I went on to move to different high schools and my parents split up. We had no money and my mom eventually had to move out of the state to get back on her feet. But I stayed true to my path and my purpose. When I would feel the cloud moving in my mind I would stay steady and forward. I had many people during this journey coming in and out of my path directing me and keeping me on course. I made it through high school and graduated with my bachelors. Did I feel the cloud during these times? Yes. Do I feel it now? Yes in a very far off distance. But I made it through. I found my purpose! I am a mom. I created 2 beautiful human beings. It's one of the most rewarding things and I get to experience it because I'm here.

I've experienced amazing trips, ran the New York marathon twice and the streets of Washington DC. I've also watched all my JR high bullies, friends, grow up, and move on. They all now have families. We like each other's post and I can't even remember if they were even nice to me when I was a kid. It doesn't matter. My teenage years are fading. I didn't let them define me and I'm incredibly grateful since I would've missed so much!! To any teen feeling this cloud remember you have a path and a purpose. It may seem hard to see but it's there. You have many memories left to be made. Stay strong and forge ahead.