

YOU HEAL ME, O WORLD [1st Place]

By Joyti Singh

You gave me hope
When despair was all I felt
You gifted me your silence
While I fought demons in my head

Once again...
Be my ray of sunshine
On a gray cold cold day
Reach out to me, O World
So I can find my way again

Give me some of your strength
When I'm ready to give all up
Help me get through tough times
So I can lift myself again

Give me your healing touch
Come, ease some of my pain
Hold me closer, O World
For I want to heal once again

Cast away this stigma
Accept me the way I am
Remind me that I'm worthy
For I want to love once again

Your gentle voice is my music
Come, show me how to dance
Once more make me smile, O world
I'm dying to live again

Give me love, give me your warmth
Your acceptance and support
Gift me these wings, O world
For I want to fly once again

I Sit by The Sea [2nd Place]
By Verdie Eaton

I sit by the sea, gazing out over the still waters, with falling tears Waiting for answers from my
Father, trying to cast out fear.

Once again, dark clouds enter and the storms of life rock my soul;
Threatening my spirit to weaken, doubt and lose control.

I fall to my knees in the wind and rain, my hands risen in praise.

Thank you, Father, I let go, your will be done.

I watch the days roll by, building hope, faith, and trust, depending solely on His power; peace
fills my soul hour by hour.

I bask in the sun; the storm has passed.

Father is here, all is well, rainbows appear at last.

I sit by the sea, basking in the sun, amidst the uncertainties of life

I know when the storms come and I become weary, I lean on my Father, never give up, then I
rest. Why?

It's just a test, I win!

A Hero of My Own [3rd Place]

By Daniel Shao

Life leaves me pained.
I wish I were not myself.
To escape a fear so deeply ingrained,
I reach for the bookshelf,
And I become a hero.

Words on the page become the new life that I live:
Today I'm brave Perseus,
Who does all he can with all he can give.
To self-doubt and regret I'm impervious.

Within this new world I find delightful respite.
Away fades my Mountain of Work-to-be-done,
Replaced by the Mountain Olympus.
Away fade my overbearing parents,
Replaced by the sea god Poseidon,
Whose pride in me is apparent.
For this new me has the heart of a lion;
For this brave hero attempts feats that I daren't.

When the ending has come,
And my journey is done,
I return to reality,
Swearing not to succumb.

My stress is still here,
My status still grave,
But now, somehow, I don't feel any fear.
I am now brave,
And I am now strong.

For I was once Perseus, who battled the gods,
Who carved his own fate,
Despite all the odds.

I've lived many lives and gained much glory.
And with every each life I have grown and grown.
I now confront reality – my real life's story.
This time, as a hero of my own.

HOW I COPE [4th Place]

By Annie Glynn

Mental illness will not get the better of me.
Robbed of joy, I refuse to let it be.
I summon the courage to get out of bed,
And do what it takes to overcome the dread.

Playing an upbeat tune, willing my body to move,
After monumental effort, I get into the groove.
A yoga class, a short nature walk,
Or calling upon a close friend to talk.
Focusing on my breath as I meditate,
I eventually reach a relaxed state.

Using my strengths of gratitude and hope,
Recalling what I'm grateful for helps me cope.
It may be the smile from a stranger that day,
Or watching my two cats engaged in play.
These strategies help during times of despair,
Along with self-compassion and prayer.

The road to healing [5th Place]

By Kelly Brennan

The road to healing is long but worth every step
Despite dark days and endless nights there isn't one that I regret
I've learned that not every day needs to be filled with unending smiles
And happiness heaped onto you in massive piles
It's ok to have days where you simply lay in bed, counting your breaths till nightfall
And it's not a sign of weakness to pick up the phone and true friends you call
A blessing it is to know individuals such as these
Strong and loving people who set your mind at ease
They pull me to earth when my head is in the sky
And raise me from the depths when all I want to do is hide
They have saved me from myself more than once you see
And in a heartbeat I'd do for them all they have done for me
They've helped me embrace my darkness and pain and then let it go
One of the hardest and bravest things I have ever known
Healing is tedious, but so worth the time
When I slip down that mountain, they help me just get back up and climb
Though I have come so far, my journey is not yet complete
But because of them I'm no longer afraid to walk the path from scorched earth to fields of wheat
Because when I get there such pride will I feel
Knowing I made it, knowing its finally real
So I'm keeping them with me on this journey and am thankful that I have this chance
Because my life truly is beautiful, but speeds by at a glance
So I will breathe deep and with them enjoy the ride
I will get through with my friends by my side

Never Stop Letting It Out [6th Place]
By Jennifer Bristol

I've seen so many blockades
That seek to slow my roll
The stop signs, the caution tape
Well, they've all got to go

The things that try so hard
To stop me in my tracks
Are the reasons I keep going far
Often never looking back

I was lucky to be given
Some creativity that boils in me
If it gets hard living
I break out my pen and write a mystery

Or maybe I invest my time
In making a little movie
One that relates my pain
But also shows I'm more than my history

If demons crop up and take hold of my mind
Something that's hard to withstand
I paint those nasty things away
My weapon is my paint splattered hand

But most of all, my soul is in music
It's a huge comfort like an auditory hug
To know other souls have felt how I do
The weight of the world; feeling swept under the rug

Playing songs that lift the heart
And open up your tear-filled eyes
The difference a really great song makes
Can revitalize a person who feels ostracized

Artistic creation keeps me going
Wraps me in canvas wings
Takes my pain and whisks it away
Until it's so small it's nothing

NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts 2017 Mental Health Poetry Contest - Top Ten Poems

The inspirational emotions it evokes
The solace that it brings
It's the best way to encourage
A wounded soul that longs to sing

As the ink pours out on paper [7th Place]

By Agnes Abdelwahabe

As the ink pours out on paper to form every single word
And the sentence comes together so this poem could be heard

And sentence by sentence, a lil more I'm free
releasing these emotions I've trapped inside of me

Expressing the anguish when anxiety kicks in
Pretending to be normal in a society I don't fit in

Telling myself it it's ok, all will subdue
And when I think it's over the problems only grew

So I'll write when I'm angry, I'll write when I'm hurt
It's been a while since I been happy but to write about that I yearn

And when my words jumble up and I am unable to speak
My thoughts and my hands go to work instinctively

So I'll write what I'm feeling in that moment that day
And spill out my thoughts that my mouth couldn't say

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NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts 2017 Mental Health Poetry Contest - Top Ten Poems

Ten minutes [8th Place]

By Swati Ambole

I break the time in pieces
and assign each piece a chore
plan only next ten minutes at a time
not a second less or more

for next ten minutes I won't think of the past
nor worry for the future events
my mind is frail, it needs gentle care
so that it can heal and mend

as the list of chores gets checked off
I start feeling better and better
if I could do this right now
I can take on bigger challenges later

it helps sometimes to slow down
step down the frantic pace
and start over in baby steps
coz life is not a race!

A Motorcycle [9th Place]

By Ariana Landeira

Simple machine, it is the vehicle
of my only thrill. exhausted, i
indulged in clever tension. i am safe
on a horse of chrome. free rush accelerated;
no stop, no halt
and those cringes from a doubtful face float
away. this race is a silver hair in free fall—
I just go with the light. Speeding
sprees swerve me like gasoline. perhaps,
the ignition of this moment is freedom.

H.A.L.T. [10th Place]

By Jeffrey Varanyak

Hunger-

Solution: Comfort Foods

Fried Chicken, Collards, Corn Bread

Anger-

Solution: Prayer

Mathew 6:9-13, Colossians 1:7-14, James 5:13-16

Loneliness-

Solution: Connect with others

Fellowship, renew friendship, build relationships

Tired-

Solution: Relaxation

Cat-naps, Soft music, meditation...

...Fishin', Fishin', Fishin'....

...and even though we're miles apart

I'll always keep you in my heart...

my only wish when life's a bore

that Ella and I go fishin' more...Amen