

I'm a 21 year old woman who used to be a young girl who self harmed. At 15 years of age, I was in year 9 at a catholic high school and already starting to prepare myself for medicine. It was my plan to become a doctor. I was suffering flashbacks from awful things that happened to me when I was even younger than that and I was also having racing thoughts and the desire to do anything and everything I could possibly do to help me get into medical school and not be anything like my parental figure. I joined the debating team, I signed up for public speaking, I ran for class captain, I entered several writing competitions.... and the more I took on, the worse these flashbacks were getting and I felt like a failure. The harder I tried, the more I was forced to re-live the traumas of my past.

I felt hopeless, and I wanted to make it all go away. I just wanted to live the life of a high achiever, someone who never drinks, never smokes, never takes drugs... Why? Because I've seen how it ruins lives. I had a family who lead me to think that those kinds of people who do drink and take drugs can actually be trusted, from being exposed them from a young age but as I grew older I came to realise that drugs and alcohol are just evil. I would do anything to have it all banned with harsher rules than what we have now.

I found that hurting myself made me forget about everything that was going on. The physical pain released endorphins which helped to alleviate the emotional pain.

The main thing that stopped me from getting help was the fact that I didn't know what was happening and I was scared to death, that if anyone found out about what happened to me, the person responsible would kill me.

Based on only my experiences, I think that what adults can do is ban alcohol and have stricter laws with drugs – even marijuana. These things make you stupid, which I suppose the government would want. But they all create Mental Health issues in some way or another and it's costing a lot of money towards mental health services, with one third of the population now with a mental illness.

Also – do more to educate pregnant women. My mum smoked when she was pregnant with me because nobody told her that it would cause psychosis in me in my teenage years. Some people are nice, kind people but they're so uneducated and stupid that they make decisions that can ruin another person's life. I guess that's what you wanted.

The best help I ever got was from children and adolescent mental health services though. Something I strongly believe in investing in. I've seen 40-50 year old patients come into psych wards who are physically unable to take care of themselves from mental health problems which probably started from a young age. The reason why they're like that is because they didn't have the facilities we have for young people today.

The programs run for young people like cognitive remediation, psycho education, dialectal behavioural therapy and even mindfulness and meditation groups... They're the miracles that turn young psych patients into "normal" people.

If someone in their 40s – 50s today who had my mental health problems, there is no chance they'd be able to go through medical school. Today, psychiatrists might tell you that they've had patients with something like bipolar who are in medical school or have already gone through it.

I owe everything to the mental health system because now, three years out of hospital and preparing for medicine again... I actually believe I can make it, and doctors themselves have told me.