

Peter Sagal, writer and host of the NPR radio quiz show *Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me*.

“This is the first time I have talked about depression to someone other than a mental health professional. I was an awkward kid who wasn't as comfortable being myself as I was being someone else. Getting along in social situations took an effort. But at no point did my parents or any other person of authority or myself, say ‘You seem to have a problem. You seem to have difficulty getting along. You're sad some of the time and you come home and sit in your room by yourself.’ Partially that's because I was a high functioning kid. I got good grades, I was involved in extracurricular activities and I had friends. So anyone looking at me thought ‘No problem’”

Sagal went on to become a successful playwright and eventually moved to Chicago with his wife and three daughters. But after many years, his marriage began to collapse. Their divorce was difficult. That's when his depression became overwhelming.

“I'm going to say ‘yea’ for medication. I can honestly say without medication I would be dead. I am grateful for medical science.”

“I couldn't afford to quit my job, so I had to do the show and be funny and amusing. There's the phrase ‘Fake it till you make it’. When I told this story to a neuroscientist friend, he told me that there are studies about how people deal with trauma or grief. There are people who dwell. They journal, they talk about it, they do podcasts about it, they obsess about it. Then there are distractors. People who say, ‘I'm going to ignore this and do that instead.’ It turns out the people who choose distraction have better outcomes.”

The friend is neuroscientist Daniel Levitin, author of *This Is Your Brain on Music*. He says distractors do a lot better. Ruminators often cut themselves off from other people. They become an echo chamber for their own negative thoughts.

When asked why he is sharing his story publicly, Sagal said that it's hard to go through depression alone. He wants others who are going through something similar that they are not unique.