



**Bonus: Listen to John Moe's interim episode "Placebo" where he sits down with listeners to discuss their own stories of living with depression**

Hello my name is Danielle Hayden and I live in Akron, Ohio.

Danielle says she had a really busy 2016. Lot of stress. Lot of worry. January 2017 came along and her hectic pace slowed down. But the depression that had been nagging her did not.

"And I still feeling pretty miserable and feeling low and thinking about killing myself and I kept crying at work for no reason and one day I was sitting at my desk just crying and not letting anyone see me cry thinking it was just time to end it. And I thought 'Wait! I can't do that. I have tickets to see Billy Joel in July. Why would I kill myself?' And that was that. Billy Joel kept me from killing myself."

Billy Joel. Being Danielle and a fatally bad decision: The Piano Man. Playing live at the baseball stadium in Cleveland this summer. So Danielle must be the world's biggest Billy Joel fan, right?

"I like his music. I have his boxed set greatest hits. But that's the extent of what I have. I do enjoy his music and I heard he puts on a really good show."

Yeah. To Danielle, Billy Joel is *pretty* good. But good enough to not die.

"And I have some friends coming in from out of town and it's kind of a big deal. So that might have played part of it as well."

"So the human contact aspect was enough to overcome from the fact that you think Billy Joel was just sort of ok?"

"Yes! Well I was very excited to hear he was coming to concert so I guess maybe I am a bigger fan than I realize. Perhaps I should support him more financially than I have."

"It kind of gives new meaning to the song *My Life*."

"Exactly!"

"And *Only the Good Die Young*."

"Yes! I was thinking about that too because I'm 41. I'm past that though."

"And *Keeping the Faith*. And every Billy Joel song I can think of. *Allentown* maybe not so much, although you're not far from Allentown in Ohio."

"Yes, that is true. I've never been. I don't know how *We Didn't Start the Fire* figures into there either."

"Well there's the line about 'I can't take it anymore.' That's in there."

"Yes! 'I go to extremes.' We could spend a long time doing this."

"It's kind of eerie. You can get a prescription for Billy Joel box sets."

But wait a sec, how did Danielle go from holding to life with Billy Joel tickets in January, to laughing with me about that fact a couple months later?

"I did end up talking to my doctor. I actually had a physical with her very shortly after that and I ended up telling her about how I was feeling, so she put me on some medications and I am going through talk therapy as well now. And I am getting help."

"Ok. Now I don't want to worry too much here, but in the Billy Joel concert is going to come and go. Are you going to be ok when that's over?"

"I hope so. That's part of the medication and therapy. I guess I will have to keep going to concerts. I'll just plan them six months out. Every half a year, I go to a show. I don't know who the next one will be though. I was thinking Bruce Springsteen. U2 is coming. Queen is coming with Adam Lambert. Not quite the same. So there's some out there."

Like I always say, everyone needs to find what works for them to start feeling better, even if Billy Joel is part of it. Maybe psychiatrists should do a joint marketing thing with Ticketmaster. I'm just brainstorming.

"My name is Bri and I am from St. Paul, Minnesota."

"And Bri, you wrote in about somebody you know who has accompanied you on your journey. Tell us about this person."

"Yes. This guy's name is Steve and he came into my life after six years of treatment for depression, anxiety, and finally this new diagnoses of OCD which I think completely the trifecta of mental illness. But he is an idea that came about when I didn't want to take another medication to treat my OCD. And I asked if there was an alternative form of treatment. My psychiatrist suggested that I separate my intrusive thoughts and personify them so that it's easier for me to address them and ignore them if I need to."

"And you named these thoughts Steve."

"I named these thoughts Steve."

Jumping in here. You got that? Steve is not a flesh and blood person. Steve is an imagined personification of intrusive thoughts. Thoughts gathered together, mentally formed into a guy, named Steve.

"First of all, why Steve? Why that name?"

"It just felt like a very annoying name to me. And I'm sorry if there are any Steves who hear that. It was just like 'Ugh. Steve.' That's the name I think of."

"So then how does Steve factor into your life? How do you interact with Steve?"

"Before Steve, I would have these thoughts. For Instance I would be in the mall and I would think to myself 'What if you went to the third floor and you just jumped off the balcony.' And I would get freaked out about these thoughts because I thought if they're in my head then I might actually do them. And when Steve came into the picture, I was able to assign those thoughts to him instead. So when I'm at the mall and I hear "What if you went to the third floor and jumped off" it's not me who's thinking that. It's Steve, and I can just say 'Steve, a ridiculous, horrible idea. I don't know why anyone would do that. You need to go somewhere else.'"

“Do you talk to Steve out loud? Do you stop in the middle of the mall and argue with Steve out loud?”

“I try to keep Steve inside my head just to not make people around me uncomfortable. But I do have a lot of friends who know about Steve. There are occasions when I will stop walking and look like I am concentrating on something and a friend will go ‘Oh, Steve?’ ‘Yup-yup. Just a second. Need to deal with this guy.’”

“Steve sounds like a jerk, but you kind of need to keep him around anyways.”

“Yes, exactly. I never invite him anywhere, but he is always there. He gets all the focus of the negative energy and I can be more myself.”

“Yeah. Bri’s doing fine, Steve.”

“He’s the guy you got to watch out for.”

Bri sent me a picture of an approximation of Steve. It’s actor Steve Buscemi when he was on the show *30 Rock* playing a private investigator trying to blend in a high-school. Backwards baseball cap, holding a skateboard, looking 50 years old, not blending in.

“I was part of a special task force, a very young looking cop who infiltrated high-schools.”

*“How do you do fellow kids?”*

*“What?”*

“My name is Annie Albers. I’m in Santa Clara, California. I am a student at Santa Clara University.”

Annie goes to school in California, but she’s from Nebraska and that’s where, a few years ago, she did something that made perfect sense to her at the time.

“My junior year of high-school, spring semester, I was in a really dark place and I was unable to get any of my homework done, any of my school work, just because I was so sad. And my parent were aware of this and they were very supportive. But my mom, obviously, was upset that my grades were suffering and she was worried about my health as well. And numerous times she threatened me with taking the door off of my room.”

“Was she threatening to do that because in order to get you to do your homework or was she worried you were going to attempt suicide?”

“Definitely a combination. But yeah, I knew it was going to happen, so I started stealing all the screwdrivers in the house. Except for one. And I kept this stock pile of screwdrivers in my room.”

“So you sneak out of your room, retrieve all the screwdrivers in the house, stash them in your room, and then hide them. As people do.”

“Yeah. It was like a week’s worth of work. I would go into the garage, find all the ones in there. Go to the shed and get all of those. And I left one in the most obvious place because I didn’t want her to realize that I was hiding all of them.”

“Cover your tracks.”

“Yeah, exactly.”

Annie’s grabbing a lot of screwdrivers because she didn’t know which one she would need for the project she was planning.

“So I came home from school one day and my door was taken off. So now it begins. The door is off of my room. But this is fine. I hang up a sheet, pretended like everything was ok. And then that night, I set an alarm for the middle of the night, one in the morning, and I got up, took out my screwdrivers and laid them out, and I took the door off of the room adjacent to mine and I hung it on my door frame. “

“Removing and hanging doors is cumbersome, it’s difficult, and it’s very heavy.”

“It was hard.”

“So, when the family got up the next day, you have a door after all.”

“Yes, and my mom came upstairs, and says ‘You’re kidding me.’ And I could tell she was kind of mad, but she wasn’t mad because it was just so ingenious.”

“Yeah, she had to be a little impressed, too.”

“Oh, yeah, completely. And she said ‘Last night, I woke up in the middle of the night because I heard these noises. And I thought it really sounds like someone is trying to hang a door.’”

“Annie, I have several questions here. First of all, the door that you took, where did you take it from? Did you take it from a sibling’s room, or somebody else’s room or what?”

“I live upstairs of my house and there’s a guest bedroom adjacent to mine and it’s the same size door I learned.”

“Secondly, what happened to the original door that your mom removed? Was it somewhere where you simply couldn’t go get it?”

“Yeah, it was downstairs in the basement and I thought ‘I can’t haul this.’ But that would have been ideal. Definitely.”

“Ok, I am trying to follow the logic here that makes it such that you can’t get out of your room. You can’t be bothered to socialize or do your homework. Yet, you have the energy and ingenuity to replace a door at one in the morning.”

“I know it doesn’t make any sense. I was just so motivated to be alone. I just wanted to be alone so bad. In just the most innocent way. I just wanted to be alone.”

“Your chronic mental illness was more powerful than you. It said ‘well you can sit here and mope. I’m going to go do something about our situation.’”

“Yeah. It was like ‘I want to stay here with you. We are going to get through this together. Except the opposite of that.’”

“Right, right. I will slowly destroy you alone in a room with a door. Well I wonder if it was sort of like an introverted depressed person’s form of outward bound, like ‘OK, I know I can do this. Maybe I am capable of other things.’”

“Exactly. It was kind of motivating, like ‘I can hang a door in the middle of the night! Maybe I can write this essay!’”

Annie says she’s doing better now than she has in a long time. Although, I should point out that nocturnal carpentry may not work for everyone. Again, find your own path to better mental health.