

Inspirational Episode 19

*Dorota
Chioma*

*Mental Health Champion & Advocate
at “Time to Change” London Network*



*This episode of **INSPIRATIONAL** features a “True Story” from the life of
Ms. Dorota Chioma (Mental Health Champion & Advocate at “Time to Change” London
Network)*

“I have suffered in silence for many years. As a teenager, I had no idea what was happening to me but as I was a high achiever, it helped to overshadow my inner struggles. At some point I was convinced that I was going insane, suffering from insomnia, I got very irritable and on edge.

When my first child was born, I easily rolled down the hill into a postnatal depression. I was convinced that I was extremely down and emotional as a natural consequence of the hormones surging through my body. In between my first and second child, there were many life events and some trauma, which always justified my state.

Then my second child arrived along with a second round of postnatal depression! My baby also had a few health concerns, and with that came the worry that drove me to the edge; the professionals were quite convinced of that.

I’ve lived on a seesaw throughout my life.

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In 2006 I paid London a visit and never returned home (not by choice, but that's a different story). This brought isolation, a new environment, difficult adjustments to a new culture, betrayal, domestic violence and I hit rock bottom, including a suicidal attempt.

I climbed out of this void, not without difficulty, and not quickly.... but I climbed and it took me several years.

Then when I thought all was better, I gave birth to my third child, and I almost died due to postpartum complications. All my past trauma was triggered by this experience. As a result, I spiraled down into depression again.

But this time round, it was recognized, and since then I have received professional help, which also led to a rediscovery of my creativity.

In March 2019 I was referred to the Expressive Art Sessions for Mums through the MumsAid charity. In the beginning I was just splashing inks or paint around and producing only dark abstract images, but I felt good after each session. Like some weight was being lifted from my shoulders. And then, at one session, I felt something opening up within me and the first image containing colors emerged.

From that moment, with encouragement from the sessions' facilitator, I started to draw and paint at home as well as during sessions. I also started to express my thoughts, feelings and states of mind through poetry.

Art became my medicine and the way I advocate for mental health and fight against the stigma attached to it. I have an urge to engage in whatever art I can daily, or I find myself feeling unwell.

Of course, I still take my medicines, but art is the one thing that provides me with a unique tranquility. Art found me but I found myself through art.

I have followed an independent artistic journey ever since.

My name is Dorota Chioma. I am a self-taught artist based in London. My artwork explores the varying states concerning the mind and mental health. Engaging in these diverse subjects leads me to a reflection and visual representation. I aim to provoke a participant to engage with unexplored territory or to soothe them with familiarity, should they identify with the concern expressed.

I have published three books so far:

***Mental Health in Pictures** which includes over 30 pieces of artwork accompanied by the narratives and my poetry, which explore the thought provoking and insightful journey into a life with mental illness.*

***Notes From Postnatal Depression - Healing Through Art**, which offers an insight into common mental health illness as experienced by new mums & mums-to-be. Although it is so common, it is still much stigmatized. The book contains a section with an academic style of research exploring depression, as well as my personal perspective. I found healing through art, and this book provides a unique and honest insight into my story through images and poetry from my creative outputs during the early stages of art therapy.*

***The Land of Eternal Hunts** - a short, rhymed story for children, kept as a dialogue between two cats about getting grey, ageing. The story, although about a sad topic, includes the affirmation of life that needs to be lived fully.*

All books are available on Amazon.

I have also recently launched a small business and hope it will take me one day to engaging in art full time. Indulge the Artisan create unique, handmade items, with artists and creative souls in mind, which make it easy to reward, spoil and motivate the creative in your life with a gift guaranteed to inspire. Visit the website: <https://www.indulgetheartisan.com/>

So, what is inspirational about my story?

I believe that sometimes we need to break into pieces to reassemble our own life into a better composition, to find the sealing agent within us to hold us whole... Although I would not want to ever go back to the dark place I have been, perhaps without it I would never rediscover my creativity? I do not know if that would be the case, but I know that embracing art changed my life for better. Provided me with a medicine which offers relief and a weapon to fight my negativity.

Follow me on: Instagram @dorota.chioma.art or

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