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Not just feeling a bit blue: learning to control my anxiety and depression

For Disability History Month and during Trans Awareness Week, Heledd blogs about her struggles with her mental health, celebrating the achievements of disabled members of her family and her wishlist if she were prime minister.

My job involves frequent interaction with the public, which can be demanding for someone with mental health difficulties.

For years, I have struggled with anxiety and depression. Awareness and acceptance of mental illness has improved over the years, but the severity can still go understated – in my late teens it nearly took my life, and it took years of counselling and therapy to bring it mostly under control. Even now, if I have an episode it can severely disrupt my life and work.

A common misconception is that depression is just feeling a little blue and anxiety is nervousness. Instead, picture a stressful and exhausting pattern of overthinking that is difficult to control, and if you tire too much a mental fog descends. In this state, you are left in an anhedonic limbo (unable to feel pleasure) until symptoms abate.

I later learned one major factor affecting my wellbeing was trying to conform to masculinity and after coming out as trans it considerably improved things. However, the LGBTQ+ community is particularly vulnerable to mental health difficulties, due to the amount of discrimination, hateful rhetoric, and hate crimes sent our way. Last year, Stonewall reported half of LGBTQ+ people experience

depression and 60% have anxiety.

To me, Disability History Month represents a chance to acknowledge the contributions of disabled people to society and of our struggles for equality of opportunity. It honours people like my mother and aunt, both blinded by Stargardt Disease in their childhood, who despite their condition achieved great things. My mother became a Paralympian in her teens while my aunt has tirelessly worked and campaigned for disability rights across the world.

If I were Prime Minister, I would:

- Listen to the needs of all the disabled community – I don't pretend to know the experiences of people with other disabilities.
- Stop the Tory attacks on the NHS and reform it so services and waiting times are once again reasonable.
- Provide free and readily available cognitive behavioural therapy (especially since the prevalence of depression and anxiety have gone up after the pandemic).
- Provide free prescriptions across the UK, as it appalled me to learn people in England are still paying to receive their medication.
- Introduce an informed consent model to our trans healthcare and drastically reducing waiting times.
- Hold the politicians and media outlets cultivating this increasingly hateful environment to account.

Your PCS rep can help support you with disability and mental health issues at work, including reasonable adjustments, sick leave and if you believe you are suffering from discrimination because of your disability. Find your local rep by logging into [PCS Digital](#).