

MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE REAL

The story of

Josie Thompson Solomon



Every little girl as dreamed up their future life, and expects it to turn out thee exact same way they originally planned. They want to be princesses, popular, marry a prince, have a family, and change the world. As little girls begin to grow up many start to realize that in reality most of their expectations won't or sometimes can't come true.

But for a sweet girl from Mesa, Arizona her life was right on track. Brighton Solomon said “Growing up Josie was a great student, athlete, pianist, homecoming queen, student body president, plus much more.” Josie had completed the dream of being a princess, even though it was just at a high school dance. She was also SBO President, no big deal just the most known kid at school. Josie's life seemed pretty perfect, she had to have been the happiest girl on Earth. She was literally living the dream.



Josie graduated high school, and was about to head to college when this horrible darkness came over her. She started to find getting out of bed was very difficult. Nobody knew what was wrong with Josie, she was so happy and now she just lays in bed all the time. Josie was taken to the doctor's office was diagnosed with Depression, than later Bipolar. Josie's life was forever changed, she no longer was living her dream. Depression and Bipolar disease is no change anyone would wish upon their life, or the life of others.

Life had taken a full turn and Josie had no idea how to overcome her mental illness. She went on a road trip not coming home for 3 months. She lived out of her car, and she talked to many many strangers. She asked every person “What gets you out of bed?” Everyone had their own unique response, it was great for Josie to see the joy in people's lives and to help her realize she is not alone.



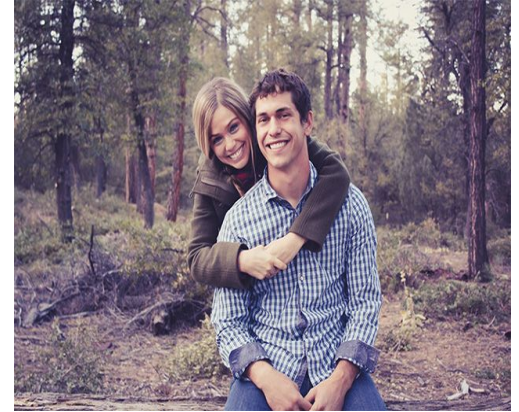
Although it still hard for Josie to get out of bed she will forever remember her road trip, and the people she met. The experiences didn't make her mental illness go away it just helped her bare her personal burdens better.



THE 444 PROJECT



While Josie started to journey around the country she started a nonprofit organization titled The444proect with two of her friends. Instead of asking “What gets you out of bed?” ,they ask “What brings you joy?” Josie hasn’t been able to feel joy since she was diagnosed, but she wants others to experience what she can't. When she asked perfect strangers that simple question it helps them realize the joy in their lives. Joy is all around us and there is so much to be happy about. Josie want people to realize what makes them smile everyday? What gets them out of bed? What are they grateful for? Like just stated, Josie want to bring joy, happiness, and light in others life because she can't have it herself. One of Josies motto is “You don’t have to be heeled to help.” The name of the project comes from the Thompson Family's favorite scripture, Alma 44 verse 4. It says “Now ye see that this is the true faith of God; yea, ye see that God will support, and keep, and preserve us, so long as we are faithful unto him, and unto our faith, and our religion; and never will the Lord suffer that we shall be destroyed except we should fall into transgression and deny our faith.”. Josie knows there is a greater being supporting her and that she will always have help if she is faithful. And that is how The444project was started.



Josie is a living witness that mental illnesses are real. She can't get the darkness in her brain to go away but she doesn't let that give up her hope. Her struggles are very much real, she has suicidal thoughts, she doesn't feel the happiness like most people can. Although through her hard times she found her sweetheart Brighton Solomon, who is now her husband. He supports her and helps her daily to stay strong and to not let these mental illnesses tear her down. In Josie's words "Brighton would be my eyes for joy. I can't see it. I can't feel it. So he has to identify, cultivate, and communicate joy to me. "Josie, this is joy. Today is joy." says Brighton everyday." Josie and Brighton travel all around talking to schools, congregations, and many other groups about their project and how Josie manages everyday. Josie is a role model to all those with mental illnesses, she is also someone they can turn to. Josie hopes and prays everyday that one day the darkness will go away but for now she just lives everyday with what she has. Mental illnesses are not all curable, Josie has tried over 80 types of treatment, and most of them didn't change a thing. Living with a mental illness can be harder than imaginable and others need to be sensitive to that. Mental illnesses are real and people that suffer from them are amazing and strong.

MY

STORY

