

Music has always been one of the greatest inspirations to me since I was a child. Back to when I was a child and jamming out to rock and roll with my dad to now finding my own music taste. Covid-19 and quarantining has pushed me to play more music, pick up my instruments again. I play the violin, ukulele, and guitar for years now, music has always been in my life and I like to spread it. Normally I don't write so informal so bear with me through this explanation. I want to bring you into my life a bit more about why I love this song.

I'm a twenty-year-old college student studying microbiology, I'm three hours away from home, and I have bipolar disorder, so days range from feeling amazing to having the lowest of lows. This has made Covid-19 an especially hard experience for me and many others who suffer with mental illness. I love to be around people; I've been working with people since 14 and I want to spend my life helping to diagnose and help patients with their health. Through music I've found a lot of ways to cope, it's a wonderful way to express how my life is going. I play the violin, guitar, ukulele, and I wanted to create something personal, but I couldn't find the words or time to do so. Therefore, let me tell you why this song is particularly meaningful to me and why I wanted to share it. After I lost my best friend it stuck out to me. He was not only my best friend but my first love so losing him was especially hard. He chose to end his life three years ago. I never realized I was coping with it very poorly until I had to sit down in quarantine and be still for the first time since I lost him. I've been so nonstop with college and working to pay for it that I never took time to properly think about what losing him meant to me. Due to Covid-19 I've been in my dorm room alone a lot, taking less trips to see friends and family, I've slowed down and truly thought about how I dealt with his death. Suicide is a bit taboo in my family so I couldn't talk to them about it, they always told me it was selfish and a waste of life. I knew him better than them though, they didn't see how hard he suffered, I did. I turned to a lot of bad habits I never realized. I drank a lot more, relied on sleeping pills to put me to sleep for the few hours I did get, and turned away from a lot of my hobbies (music, writing, photography, volunteering). This is the first time truly sharing my story publicly, so I thank you if you're taking time and reading this. Let me show you some journal entries of how the lows of bipolar disorder make me feel when I'm thinking of him. Please be warned this mentions a lot about suicide if you're sensitive to it, please skip them.

"i can't believe that 9-10 years ago i met you. that's insane. i'm twenty, i thought i'd be thriving so much more than right now. i'm just the same, i think about hurting myself, i think about pain, i think about you, i want to stop thinking. the only difference is if i really wanted to, now i could just go to the store and buy the gun or the knife and end it. i could drive myself to the bridge i wanna jump off of. i could buy the drugs or overdose on sleeping meds. i hope no one reads this. unfortunately i know what the pain of losing someone you love too much is like. and i don't want anyone to go through that. it's so awful. i'm so dizzy. my sleeping pills are definitely working. i only took half a pill. imagine if i took a half dozen."

"you're on my mind... it's been three years but these past two days. F***. it sucks because i can't handle a breakup let alone the fact that i still don't have anyone who knew what i was going through like you did. some people almost are mad you did what you did. for me i think i almost knew it was going to happen looking back. i didn't know how to properly help you back then and i'm sorry. suicide is not the answer, and it never should have gotten to that point that you felt like you needed to die like that. turning to drugs and alcohol heavily like that. being so reckless like that. i'm sorry i didn't help either when i was so dismissive and angry with you. you didn't need that on top of the hell going on in your head. it's so easy to put on a fake smile i'm learning. i want to help everyone but myself and it reminds me of you. i'm so dead set on talking

about everyone else's problems and not my own. the dumbest thing about all of this is, even now i'm thinking about how i could've helped you and not focusing on how i need help now. that's sad. i'm sad."

"For the past two days all I've thought about consistently is the fact that I want to die. Isolation brings that out in me. I would never go back to harming myself or actually killing myself but sometimes that thought is enough to push me into an episode. My heart or brain whatever, feels a lot of sick and hurt right now. I don't want to be here at college I want to be home. I want my instruments and family. Without music or the ability to make music more specifically, I feel very empty and bored. I just want to lay on the ground and stop my brain from racing for more than two seconds. I'll be fine. I just need to make it through quarantine, I just need to make it through this year. I was hoping that when I got to college away from the constant criticism of my dad I'd feel better but I can't make friends and I don't have a way to meet new people. My roommate and I have never even had a real conversation. That's sad isn't it. F*** life I wanna die."

These unfortunately are real thoughts I have. They came from a longer entry I wrote when I was having a very hard week. I cried every day and every night because I was so filled with anger. I listen to music and wrote out what I was going through to get rid of a lot of stress in my life that specific day. The next week when my manic episodes had subsided, I called the doctor to be put back on my medication.

I also want people to know that with bipolar disorder it's not just rapid mood swings, these are things I'll think about for weeks straight and then for the next two months I'm elated and happy again. However, music is the greatest distraction I've ever had to making those horrible lows better. I didn't have these thoughts so severely before Covid-19 because I'd always have friends around me. I'd always have that distraction, to keep my mind off those low thoughts in the back of my mind. I've never shared the struggles I go through, because they were very minimal. Just like thousands of Americans I've lost my job, been stuck at home with a parent that is critical and have mental illness all because of Covid-19.

Nothing has made me feel as happy as when I listen to this specific song. It reminded me of my first kiss with him, about holding hands in the movie theatre, about when he moved away, and I thought I'd lost him, but we still texted each other until the middle of the night every night. He made dozens if not hundreds of people happy, everywhere he went. This song brings out the happy memories I had with him. I hope it makes you think of someone special too.

It's a very sad time in our history, because many people like me are thinking similar thoughts. For those people I wanted to share this message, maybe you can find music or something that takes your mind off the hard times were in. I think this can be used as a source to show an example of how mental illness and Covid-19 correlate.

That is my experience in Covid-19.

If you ever feel suicidal or need to talk the number for the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline is 800-273-8255.