


Written some time in December 2018

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Put someone in a psychiatric hospital whether public or private, you can be sure that they will exhibit signs of mental and emotional distress which could possibly lead to an ~~emotion~~ mental illness.

When I was seeing my psychiatrist for a consultation in her room which is attached to the hospital (this was some time after my hospital stay). The same carpet, the same information coming over the PA system and even the same tiles on the toilet floor did not re-traumatize me but immediately imagined putting myself in there, the  clinic, and back to the horrors I experienced there - like a prison - it could easily make me sick even though I was relatively well when I went in. Maybe not well. The isolation, the well-meaning ignorant nurses, the walking mindlessly around the passages for exercise. Being told endlessly to

practice mindfulness. Imagine trying to be mindful staring at the little sparkles in the bathroom floor tiles. Listening to well-meaning, inappropriate presentations using white boards, taking ever increasing drugs. Being led to smoke in a small paved courtyard with a few rose bushes, listening to people I didn't know, young women discussing dispassionately how best to kill themselves, day after day, even though some of the people were really nice.

Eating alone in my room. Being questioned continuously by staff and not staff about how I was feeling, without much heart, no understanding and being told what might help, the same thing over and over again. Depersonalized! It's not that the staff were not well-meaning but just unquestioning and ignorant of a possibly dangerous system.

I imagine these conditions put on a well-person or maybe on me as individual

And having to spend hours and hours by myself with nothing to do except watch TV or read - both of which by now I couldn't do, so having to spend hours and hours doing 3 things in my room - knit, draw with textas and yoga. over and over again - no-one to talk with.

AND all this while I was screaming inside

The Trans Cranial Magnetic Stimulation (a mild alternative to ECT) was helping me. I clung to it every day. It felt like pampering, sitting in a big soft chair with my legs raised and head supported, my anxiety abated. For half an hour, full attention from the nurse.

Now I must write what happened when I came home at the end of January 2017 having been in the [REDACTED] Clinic for one month:

A friend picked me up and when we got home he said: you look so much

better than than you did when I picked you up at the hospital - you were all grey and looked like a 90 year-old. Now you have colour in your cheeks and the greyness has gone. (The hospital staff did say that you are only about 70% well when you leave hospital) No wonder. I'm not sure how many days he stayed, not long.

Suddenly I was alone - nobody. I began the eternity of starting my life again. It took a couple of months to begin to live almost normally. There was no one to help me. I sat on the cane couch in the back yard looking at the nasturtiums in front of me, smoking a cigarette. I had got hooked on cigarettes in the hospital and was still addicted. I suddenly had a horrible thought: "I am old, alone and sick." Not good! I had to rigidly ritualize myself and daily routine just to fill in time with some meaning with no-one around.

I would get up no earlier than 11am, go outside and smoke 2 cigarettes, throwing the butts in the garden. Then I would go to the bathroom, wash my face and hands and clean my teeth, wipe them dry on a towel on the back of the bathroom door. I don't remember cooking and eating but I must have done. I have never strayed far from good eating. Loss of appetite was never one of my problems. I'm not sure how I actually got through the days with a routine.

I saw a psychologist in [REDACTED] who wasn't very good for me.

All this happened August/September 2016 and I was back in hospital Boxing Day. 2016 for another month.

