

i. selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor

"It's a **chemical imbalance.**"

"I'm going to increase your **dose** to 100mg."

"I want to run some blood work first, just to narrow down the **issue.**"

"This may have some side effects."

"It's a chemical **imbalance.**"

"We can consider switching to a different **medication** if this causes issues."

"Meet with me in two weeks to discuss any adverse **effects.**"

"This type of medication will block the **reuptake** of serotonin in the brain."

"Your depression is caused by a lack of **serotonin.**"

"It's a chemical **imbalance.**"

"If you take these pills, your serotonin **levels** will rise."

"They will become **normal.**"

"It's a chemical imbalance."

"It's a **chemical imbalance.**"

ii. bird's eye view

A fear of driving across tall bridges.

A fear of driving alone.

A fear of driving alone, late at night, when there's nobody but me and the stars, and yet I'm speeding along in a metal box, just hurdling along, faster and faster, and the void of the ditch ahead calling, faster, faster, faster, just me, and nobody else, nobody to interfere, nothing to stop me, alone with myself and all the shouting voices in my head...

A fear of public spaces.

A fear of parties and events.

A fear of places, even ones where I know I'll have friends, because I know I just won't be able to shake that feeling, the feeling of being separated from the world, like a hologram, visible and audible only in the most literal sense of the words, and as soon as anyone looked closer, they'd find out I'm not really there...

A fear of loneliness.

A fear of being alone at night and unable to fall asleep.

A fear of being alone, alone with just me and my thoughts, thinking about the questions that keep reappearing in my brain, *do I want to keep living? do I deserve to live? do I think that life is worthwhile?*, and struggling to find the answers, laying awake, my thoughts racing, my body exhausted but unable to rest...

A fear of sharp objects.

A fear of knives and blades.

A fear of being by myself, with anything sharp enough to pierce my skin, because, what if I can't control myself, what if the urges overwhelm me again, what if I can't keep my head up...

Wednesday, January 22, 2020, 2:17 AM

yeah sometime soon - but NOT when i'm tempted to use them - i'm going to go through my room and get rid of sharp tools and shit, cuz it's clear i can't trust myself alone at this point

iii. part of me

Sertraline tablets are a **prescription medication** used to treat Major Depressive **Disorder**, OCD, Panic Disorder, PTSD, and Social Anxiety Disorder. It is important to talk with your **healthcare** provider about the **risks** of treating depression and also the risks of not **treating** it. You should **discuss** all treatment **choices** with your healthcare provider.

If I take these pills, does it shut off part of me?
The part of me that wanted to kill myself?

Does it keep it buried?
Will it ever come back?

It tried to kill me,
But it's still a part of me.

If I take these pills, do I lose the chance,
to reach out to that part of me,
and to help it to heal?

Is that even what I want?

I don't like to give up on people,
and it's still a part of me.

Sunday, October 18, 2020, 2:37 AM

How come when people cut themselves while jerking off it's "masochism" and "kinky" but when I cut myself at 3 am while crying into my pillow I "need help" and am a "suicide risk"

iv. run like hell

Claim: If I work, work, work, and never stop, I can fix myself.

Reasoning: If I go to bed every night exhausted at 3 AM, I'll be too tired to distract myself with the hard questions.

Reasoning: If I can cover my walls with medals and certificates from things I've done, I'll have a sense of who I am.

Reasoning: If I spend my life rushing from place to place, from responsibility to responsibility, I won't find myself lingering outside of my comfort zone.

*The individual must be experiencing five or more symptoms during the same 2-week period and at least one of the symptoms should be either (1) depressed mood or (2) **loss of interest or pleasure**. To receive a diagnosis of depression, these symptoms must cause the individual **clinically significant distress** or **impairment** in social, occupational, or other important areas of **functioning**. The symptoms must also not be a result of substance abuse or another **medical condition**.*

Claim: Running away from my problems worked.

Reasoning: In my first year of doing robotics, my team qualified for the world championship event.

I skipped meals to work on the robot. I averaged one meal per day. One of my teammates was so concerned about me that she told my parents. They brushed it off.

Reasoning: When I came back home from boarding school, I started a new robotics team at my school.

I blamed my self harm scars on carelessly handling sharp metal. I often was so stressed that I would snap and get angry at my teammates.

Reasoning: I got a perfect score on the SAT.

I cut myself the night before the test. I cut myself the night after the test. I cut myself the night before my score came out. I cut myself the night after my score came out. Somehow, perfection wasn't enough.

Reasoning: I built software projects that I'm still proud of to this day, and I taught myself about software design patterns, network engineering, and computer vision.

For weeks at a time, I woke up at about 3 PM, turned on my computer, wrote code, went downstairs to eat dinner with my family, came back upstairs, and sat at my desk and wrote more code until about 4 AM.

Reasoning: I took three AP classes and 2 dual-enrollment courses at a local college each semester.

I slept an average of four hours per night. On the good nights, I would be too exhausted to cut, too exhausted to think, too exhausted to exist.

v. madeline

So there's this video game I play sometimes. It's called *Celeste*. The main character, Madeline, is trying to climb a mountain. It's what you might call a 'platformer' game--you have to get Madeline from platform to platform, jumping and dashing through the air. And it's famously hard, requiring precise timing of just the right button inputs.

Just as Madeline isn't a mountain climber, I'm not much of a gamer. My hand-eye coordination is abysmal, and my ability to make split-second decisions isn't great either. It took me months, attempt after attempt, sometimes grinding for hours just to get past a single screen of a level, but eventually, I made it to the summit.

The mountain represents Madeline's depression and her anxiety.

Along the way, Madeline meets **Part of Her**. **Part of Her** tries to push her back down the mountain. **Part of Her** tries to tell her that she's not a mountain climber. **Part of Her** stalls the gondola she's travelling on, causing Madeline to have a panic attack. And when Madeline tries to leave **Part of Her** behind, **Part of Her** knocks her down to the base of the mountain, making her climb all the way back up again.

Then, Madeline talks to **Part of Her**. She asks **Part of Her** for help. She works *with* **Part of Her** to finish climbing the mountain.

She works *with* **Part of Her**.

She doesn't take medicine to turn **Part of Her** off.

I took Madeline's name. I am Brooke Madeline Chalmers.

What about **Part of Me**?

vi. to take comfort in insanity

Saturday, October 10, 2020, 4:06 AM

i feel like i've got 4 options here

1. i come out as trans, quite possibly get laughed out of the room, start the long and humiliating role of trying to transition while my parents are super judge-y about it and probably aren't very supportive

2. i tell her about my depression, and one of the four scenarios i talked about happens, like, it could go either way

3. i continue to do nothing, and nothing really changes except I risk possibly ending up in the psych ward (and i probably risk my mom deciding that i have depression anyway, leading my down one of the same paths as #2)

4. i kill myself before any of the above has a chance to happen - this one seems pretty appealing ngl, and it would probably be a no-brainer if it wasn't for the fact that my recent cutting has started boosting my mood and i'm not as impulsively suicidal anymore

eh, who am i kidding, as long as i can manage to drive myself to the bridge, i'd jump without hesitation

but like, if i try to tell my mom about having depression, i doubt anything productive would come from it, because

1. it would require my mom admitting that her parenting wasn't spectacular, which i doubt she would be willing to admit, since she considers herself such a great ally to lgbt etc, and she's taken criticism as a personal attack before

2. it would require me to come out as trans, which, uh, haha NOPE

i guess i gotta find a different spot to cut... which i'm not doing very well at, considering i did more yeets in the same exposed place less than an hour ago

i guess, if i end up in the ward,, you know why lmao

When someone shows symptoms of depression, we say that they **suffer from** depression. We say that they **struggle with** depression. We say that as if depression is some ghostly, **external force** that they're fighting against.

It's comforting. It puts some distance between mental illness and everyday life. If people who try to kill themselves have some **condition**, if they're **diagnosed** with some **label**, if they're **insane**... it means suicidality is something that impacts "those people." Not us. It means that someone's decision to end their own life can't be a rational decision.

As soon as we let go of that notion... the tough questions start. *Do I want to go on living? Or what about my friend who killed herself two years ago--is there something I could've done to influence her decision? Would she still be here if only I did the right thing?*

When I read these messages that I sent, I'm not reading the writing of a **disease** that **hijacked** my brain. I'm not reading the work of a **chemical imbalance**. I'm reading my own words. Those words were written by me.

At some point, I considered my current situation, examined my options, deliberated, and decided that I wanted to kill myself.

And yet, something happened at the last minute that pulled me away.

And yet, I'm still here.

And yet, I don't want to die right now.

And yet, I did back then.

As much as I can try to tell myself that **I wasn't myself**, or that it was some **chemical imbalance**, or that the person who wrote those messages a year ago isn't the same person typing this on my laptop right now... deep down, I know it was.

I wrote those words.

vii. the problem that needs fixing is with the
chemicals in my brain

Friday, March 6, 2020, 9:33 PM

i feel like i have too many masculine traits (not just physical but also like mannerisms and stuff) and i'd either never be able to pass as female or i'd kill myself from the stress of trying, and most likely the latter

The **problem** that needs fixing is with the chemicals in my brain.

It's not that I wasted years running away from life.

It's not that I feel uncomfortable with every aspect about how I fit into the world around me.

The problem that **needs fixing** is with the chemicals in my brain.

It's not that my dad refused to acknowledge me when my family visited me on campus.

It's not that I spent so long being told by my family and society to be someone I'm not.

The problem that needs fixing is with the **chemicals** in my brain.

It's not that I'm left with shattered remnants of my sense of identity.

It's not that I'm somehow supposed to be a good student, be social, keep up with responsibilities, *and* try to clean up the mess I've made for myself inside my skull.

The problem that needs fixing is with the chemicals in my **brain**.

The problem that needs fixing is with the chemicals in my brain.

It's not that I'm left trying to figure out how to live, too dysphoric and uncomfortable to be a boy, but too tall and masculine and deep-voiced and awkward to be a girl.

It's not that I need to learn everything about myself all over again, from what colors I like to what kind of clothes I like to wear, and I need to do it with that looming sense of self-doubt.

The problem that **needs fixing** is with the chemicals in my brain.

It's not that I hate my voice so much that I'm afraid to talk in class or even introduce myself to people.

It's not that every social interaction has become a minefield, every time I get dressed in the morning is a choice between the discomfort I'm familiar with and the discomfort I'm not, every class and club meeting requires solving a matrix equation of *am I out to these people? do I know if they'll be supportive? do I know if I'll have the confidence to be okay if they aren't?*, and every time I so much as walk through the IV lobby is a test of my sense of self.

The **problem** that needs fixing is with the chemicals in my brain.

viii. as i do, not as i say

Tuesday, July 14, 2020, 1:44 PM

I'm rambling like, but honestly, I feel a lot less suicidal if I think about what 20-year-old Brooke would be like, then consider that I'd be killing her, not just present-me

I might not enjoy my life very much, and I might be fine with ending it, but I think she enjoys hers

I started taking antidepressants on January 9, 2021.
And they helped.

I got the confidence to open up to a therapist.
I gradually stopped cutting myself.
I finally came out to my parents.

Gradually, the voice in my head, the one telling me to kill myself...
It started to quiet down.

Did I kill it before it could kill me?