To Be or Not to Be by Daniel Sullivan

Checking into the hospital is always an option. Depression can be crippling. Hopelessness is all too common a symptom. It’s scary when staying the same has been ruled out and med changes just aren’t working. Near the end of my last depression, I could only see two choices: a hospital stay or suicide. I listened to my survival instincts and chose to check myself in. This was literally my only viable alternative.

My most recent hospital stay lasted two weeks. Upon discharge I was fortunate enough to be referred to McLean Hospital’s Behavioral Health Program, commonly known as a partial program, which is basically a two-week course in CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) and DBT (Dialectic Behavioral Therapy). For me, the crux of CBT was “action precedes motivation”. In scientific terms “a body in motion tends to stay in motion.” In layman’s terms, “get up off your ass and get moving.” A major aspect of DBT is mindfulness: trying to stay in the moment; trying not to let minds be cluttered with thoughts of the past or anxieties about the future.

It was at the partial program that I learned that here at the Cole Center they were looking for volunteers. Structure, I think, is crucial to anyone, but especially people living with mental illness. If anything, the partial program gave me a reason to get out of bed. I was there 6 hours a day, Monday through Friday. I was quite happy to hear that the Cole Center was looking for volunteers. I was delighted to find out that they needed someone to write for their newsletter which was right up my alley.

They say that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. The phone may seem heavier than a boulder right now but it’s really not. There are resources everywhere. Fog always lifts. With faith and some hope and some help, I was able to lift myself out of despair. And self-confidence – “oh, where have you been, self-confidence?” – has begun to filter its way in. And what’s best is that it’s great to be writing again.