

Rae Pollock • 412.498.8985 • RaePollock@outlook.com

log one



and I think I can pinpoint – almost down to the second – when my second manic episode started, which is pretty cool, I think, for one, because mania can be so *charmingly* cagey, but more so because being able to pinpoint this moment in time means I can actually remember it.

it's like a screenshot, almost, that for me sets off a whirlwind of events I'm still not even sure I fully understand. it's something I can latch on to, now, looking back – and this is wildly important because, if you've ever experienced mania for yourself, maybe you can relate to not even really *knowing* what you experienced.

maybe you can relate to having to piece together days or weeks or months of your life based on what others tell you because you weren't actively, voluntarily present.

maybe you can relate to this through depression.

it's really hard to talk about mental health for a lot of reasons.

one, being, it's oftentimes objectively difficult to recall or *re-visit* events during periods of psychosis. or severe depression. or heightened anxiety. or trauma – these parts are always hard.

another reason, though, is that we make it hard.

in our society, we make it hard to have a brain.

it's hard enough having a brain – because, what the hell? – but then we go and make it even harder by making brains, like, embarrassing? or shameful? or something?

we make having a brain shameful?

we make mental health shameful?

what? I'm embarrassed about enough parts of me, and now I have to be embarrassed about the fact that I have a brain?

honestly, like, it sounds so silly, but we all have brains.

I'm not lying to you, I swear, we all have brains that – believe it or not – function in different ways.

and mania and depression and anxiety and trauma and every fraction of every possible fragmented strip in between are all parts of my brain.

and – I'm not lying to you here, either – that's totally okay.

it's okay, and it's sometimes part of having a brain, which – I'm not sure about you, but – I'm pretty stoked to have. like, if you drew a pie chart that said “percent of which Rae's stoked to have a brain,” you'd have to scribble in that whole bad boy with, like, a honkin' Sharpie – you know the ones with the chiseled tip that're way too big to ever write with except for when you're moving and need to mark boxes? the ones you see all the time but when you need them they've all scattered, obviously, because *that* would be too easy, so you're left with, like, an average Sharpie that does the job almost as well, which begs you to ask the question, “are honkin' Sharpies with chiseled tips a necessity, or have we gone too far?”

this, though – I will say – has not always been the case. me being stoked I have a brain, I mean. I can't speak on the historic, consumerist need for varying Sharpie options.

I can much more loosely pinpoint two years of my life where if you were to draw a pie chart labeled “percent of which Rae's stoked to have a brain,” you wouldn't need any Sharpie, let alone a honkin' one.

it's really hard to talk about mental health for a lot of reasons.

the more we talk about it, though, the easier it can get, because, at the end of the day – like I *said* – we all have brains. and talking about our brains and our experiences and our episodes and our “whatevers” can make having a brain feel less lonely. and less scary. and less grueling.

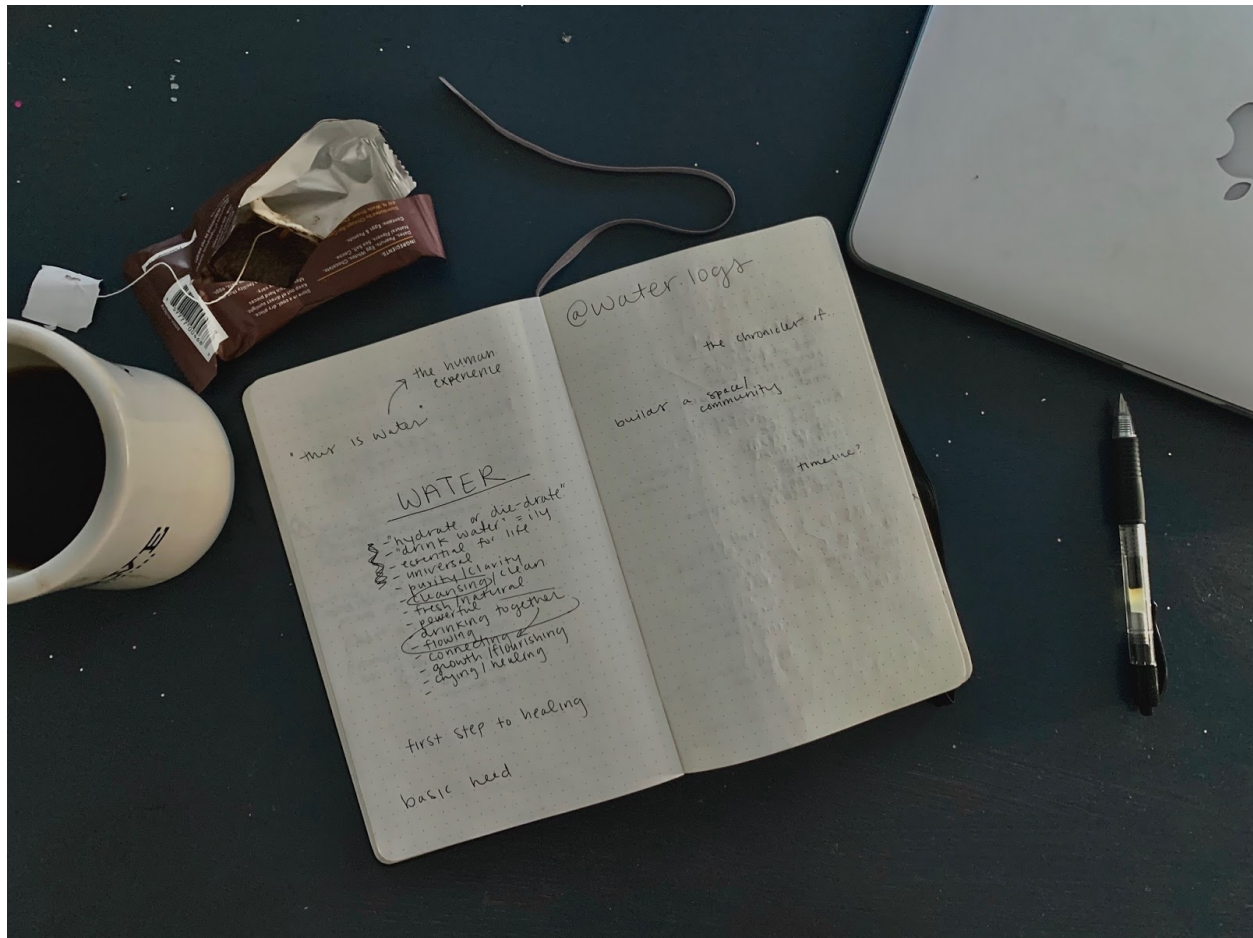
and all-around, I think, better.

so, I think I can pinpoint when my second manic episode started.

I guess I'm not totally sure if it was the moment I burst into tears on my yoga mat, or the moment I jumped up from just having cried to take a picture of the tears on my mat *"because this is my truest self! this is my essence! I can see myself! I'm so present!"* or the moment I chose to start doing yoga because I hadn't slept in two days, but it was around this time.

and it was around this time I had to, once again, start piecing myself back together.

log two



like I said, we all have brains.

this may not be the most astounding takeaway of all the things you read today, but I can make a case for it being maybe the most fundamental, which, arguably, makes it more important – I’m just saying.

while the notion ‘we all have brains’ is entirely elementary, it’s almost so much so that we forget it’s true. do you know what I mean? like, it’s almost so assumed that we take it for granted?

like – okay. take water, for example.

I think we take water for granted maybe more than we take for granted our brains.

everything, in some way or another, came from water. every ounce of light and drop of creation stems from the pool that breeds life – and we just, like, have it. it’s just a thing. that we have.

it’s around us all the time whether we’re asking if it’s filtered at a coffee shop (I love you so dearly, LA), kicking a stone into it on a hike, or sitting in it, thinking, “*Jesus Christ, this is disgusting. I shouldn’t have drawn a bath without having cleaned my bathtub in how long, what the hell?*”

water gives way to each and every part of our days, directly or otherwise – water is simple, and it's inarguably and totally necessary.

water isn't trying to be anything or trying to do anything, either, really – it just is. it just *is* giving life. it just *is* running through us all. it just *is* the source of all healing.

and that makes sense. simple.

now, brains, though – those super don't always make sense.

brains have a cheeky way of making everything about themselves when we have so many other things to think about like, oh, I don't know – how to survive a global pandemic?

and just as it's a given that we all have brains, it's a given that we all have times when our brains may not let us feel the way we want to feel or times when our brains may not really feel like our own brains.

and it's in these times that we realize just how much we may take our brains for granted when they *are* working the way we want them to work.

and it can be so frighteningly distressing to find yourself, perhaps, in the middle of a manic episode or an anxiety attack or a pandemic or an apathetic state you don't feel you have any tools to help yourself out of, and you're slipping, somehow, in some way – drowning – losing sight of the life you picture yourself living...it can feel like you're drowning in water you forgot you were in.

sometimes, having a brain is really hard.

sometimes, managing mental health can be really hard.

but it's something everyone has to do, because – as I've said many times now – we all have brains.

and understanding your brain and figuring out your mental health is, like, so massively, insurmountably important. and it can feel so absolutely, overwhelmingly impossible – especially when you don't know where to start. especially when you don't know how to start.

before you can figure anything – let alone everything – out, you have to start somewhere. and, I don't know about you, but I have a much easier time starting something when I'm not starting it alone. and, trust me on this one, you're super *not* the first person to start managing your mental health.

so, if we just start. together. and we agree on the very basic ideas that we all have brains and we all need water to live, then at least we're starting somewhere.

at least we're starting – ooh! we can start a brain trust and call it *the brain logs* – no, that's dumb. that's super, super dumb. what about, *the water logs*?

better.

let's start *the waterlogs*.

log three



wading back to my yoga mat –

my brain chemicals are actively *assaulting* my senses.

I'm shaking. vibrating. seriously – I'm still wiping tears off my cheeks while I'm smiling so hugely to myself, so excited – filled to the brim with unbridled energy and a resolute purpose: to...

wait.

I remember this moment. looking at my computer, having just had forty and two-thirds thoughts zip through my mind in a matter of seconds, and I couldn't figure out what I wanted to do.

I couldn't figure out what I was doing.

what?

and that's when I knew – I needed to get help. now. two days ago, preferably, but also *now* –

I said having a brain can sometimes feel like you're drowning. having a brain can sometimes feel like you're soaring, too, and a brain that feels like it's soaring is so exuberantly incredible that you might never want to stop it from soaring. you might never want to lose sight of the unencumbered waves of fresh ideas or the seemingly endless upbeat energy or the unwavering belief in yourself as a person or an artist or –

except, if your brain has been soaring before, and you've stuck around to figure out that brains hurt a *hell* of a lot once they're done soaring and they, like, lag for four months, scraping by on autopilot trying to make sense of it all, then you know you don't really want your brain to soar.

you know you don't really want to see what comes after you've let your brain soar.

so, I couldn't figure out what I was doing or remember if I had even been doing something in the first place, and that's how I knew it was time to make a choice.

my brain chemicals were already far and away having their own party-bonanza-happy-fun-times-oh-wait-actually-am-I-panicking-shoot-this-is-really-hard-woo! spasms of their own, and there was nothing I could do about that, but I *could* make the decision that I was going to take this one head-on.

I could choose to take what I'd learned through my first go around – *big yikes* – and do my best to navigate mania and all of its convoluted tricks and turns in the healthiest way possible.

it sounds silly, maybe, squaring up against your own brain, but that's truly how it felt. for me, at least. that's how it feels for me sometimes, and every new thing I learn about myself or my brain or how to manage mental health seriously burrows its way into my psyche somehow, and I swear it helps me even when I'm not able to help myself.

I don't remember a lot from my time spent in mania because psychosis is one tough b-word, but my doctors and my friends and my parents definitely do. and this time, they could see gleams of me trying my best to help myself, which, for the record, like – I'm amazing. straight up. anyone going through any type of –

anyone dealing with their brain is amazing. anyone dealing with this bull**** is amazing. we all deserve, like, brain medals, or something – can you imagine? *brain medals?* talk about participation trophies...

but seriously. none of this is easy. squaring up against your brain isn't easy. going through parts of your life where you're not fully in the driver's seat isn't easy.

and it's really not easy to make the decision to call your doctor. and your mom. and your roommate.

it's really not easy to have your brain telling you ~it's on top of the world! woo!~ when you're trying to make an emergency appointment with your psychiatrist. it's really not easy to have to fight back tears – of joy, maybe? no. yes? – when your mom picks up and you have to tell her *it's happening again*.

“none of this is easy,

but I'm going to be okay,” I remember chanting to myself, rocking back and forth. I had to keep telling myself that when I realized where this was going. I kinda had to prepare myself before the rest of my head took up too much space – brains are wild.

when I realized I was in mania, I called my roommate, because I knew I needed help.