spected mental health professional and honor student in graduate school. There was a fair share of security attached to my job, and there were opportunities for career advancement before my illness.

My episodes and hospitalization undermined my own accomplishments. Not only was I experiencing a rebirth emotionally, physically, mentally, and socially, but I was as an infant in the arms of my employer.

My work and work environment had contributed significantly to my “breakdown,” but I was ill equipped to move into a new job situation when I returned to work. At the same time that I needed to relocate organizationally, I was clinging to what was known and familiar to me.

In time, as I grew stronger and could recognize the destructive aspects of my work situation, I challenged the injustices. My struggle against management resulted in a most satisfactory job transfer to the Mental Health Study Center of the National Institute of Mental Health. The first steps toward the reconstruction of my dormant ego and infantile identity were taken when the Chief of the Child and Youth Programs Section, Dr. Milton Shore, reviewed my job application and resume, invited me in for an interview, expressed an interest in having me work with him, and engaged the system to hire me. It was as though he had injected me with hope.

The new job situation only improved over time. Special arrangements were made and approved for me to complete my graduate work while conducting research and providing counseling to students in a high school. My on-site supervisors, whom I subsequently told of my experiences as a mental patient, applauded my excellent work and assured me of a continued place on the staff. If there was discrimination, it was in my favor. My consulting assignments broadened to all areas of the school; my counseling caseload was increased; I was asked to develop staff training programs on sensitivity and caring. They rewarded me for my own intense sensitivity to kids and my ability to help them find solutions (rather than to “wallow” in problems). I set my own limits and priorities. I was given opportunities to translate my own personal tragedies into something meaningful for others.

Many people have served as my advocates these past 5 years. I have mentioned only a few of them here.

My family and friends have continued to give love in abundance. They coached, encouraged, cried, and laughed with me. They have been my army against those who were denying me my place as a productive, worthwhile member of society.

My therapist, Jeremy P. Waletzky, M.D., has become a friend. He has permitted me to be his teacher.

Norman Rosenberg, my attorney at the Mental Health Law Project, validated my sanity. He was my armor in the battles against a university which was denying me re-admission to graduate school and against a supervisor who threatened me with disability retirement.

My supervisors have restored a sense of meaning and purpose to my life. By giving me a place to give to others, I believe they have given many places to many people like me.

The Author

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Poetry

Tomorrow

I'm going to spew my emotions into the largest of Rubbermaid wastebaskets, seal it with Reynolds aluminum wrap, and set the hazardous urn out for the trashman.

—Lynne Morris, 9/20/80

I open my mouth and out flood words of cowardice, pouring over any listener like an upset gallon of bright yellow paint.

I wonder how easily the listener removes my words.

I feel like a nuisance, overdramatizing the insecurities other people manage to understate.

I never learned the paintbrush method of dealing with fears.

—Lynne Morris, 9/20/80
I'm viewed
as an open can
of gasoline,
apt to explode
and burn someone
at any time,
and I'm aware of that
and hurt by that.

I'm viewed
as a helium balloon,
apt to pop or
drift away,
and I'm aware of that
and hurt by that.

I'm viewed
as honey,
apt to be sticky
if not
properly contained,
and I'm aware of that
and hurt by that.

The more you
view me
negatively,
the more I hurt,
the more
I behave negatively,
and I'm aware of that
and hurt by that.

I'm viewed
as a cigarette,
a threat
to your health
and very expensive,
and I'm aware of that
and hurt by that.

I'm viewed
as a scarecrow,
apt to hurt
your reputation
if you talk to me,
and I'm aware of that
and hurt by that.

The more you
view me
negatively,
the more I hurt,
the more
I behave negatively.
To my great
misfortune
I am a
person
who needs
people,
and I'm aware of that
and hurt by that.

I
am
the
rear tire
of a bicycle,
not trusted enough
to be a
front tire,
expected to go
ground and round
in one narrow rut,
never going very far,
ignored
except
when I
break down.
Then
I get lots of
frightening,
angry
attention
and
I am put into
a
garage,
sometimes for months,
where
I forget my function
and
I become afraid
to function
and all functions seem useless.

Next time out
I think I will be
an off-ramp
from a
freeway.

—Lynne Morris, 9/8/80

—Lynne Morris, 9/8/80