

Bethany Yeiser's Story

Bethany Yeiser was a scholarship-winning researcher and violinist -- playing with the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Program at thirteen, publishing biochemistry papers as a young scientist, including a first-authored article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

In her senior year of college, schizophrenia took hold. Her first psychotic episode came after a trip abroad; she moved out of her dormitory, drifted across the country, and ended up homeless in Los Angeles -- sleeping in lounges, libraries, and public bathrooms, eating from garbage cans, controlled by voices that gave her orders. Her illness drove her to refuse all contact with her family and friends. She was homeless for four years.

She was finally picked up by police and taken to a psychiatric hospital for evaluation. After a year on five different antipsychotics -- with punishing side effects and little success -- her doctor determined she was treatment-resistant and prescribed clozapine. Gradually, she came back. She returned to college, graduated with honours in molecular biology, and picked up her violin again.

Bethany wrote about it in her memoir, *Mind Estranged: My Journey from Schizophrenia and Homelessness to Recovery* (2014) -- the companion to her mother's book, *Flight from Reason*. She went on to found the CURESZ Foundation and now speaks publicly as a schizophrenia advocate and practicing violinist.

Her psychiatrist, Dr. Henry Nasrallah, calls her "living proof that recovery from schizophrenia is possible with good medical care, solid family support and the courage to keep fighting."