Lana Gee

I remember when I was a teenager thinking that mental health issues only happened to people in unfortunate circumstances such as dealing with loss of a loved one, traumatic events, financial hardship etc.

Due to this incorrect assumption, It took me a long time to recognise I was suffering from anxiety and depression because there was no obvious event in my life that triggered it.

Some mornings I would wake up and the idea of getting up and opening the fridge was impossible, so I slept in. I would be grumpy and irritable for no discernable reason. I had near constant social anxiety and was hypercritical of every mistake I made and that made me feel worthless.

I was convinced that my extremely negative view of my life and the world around me was how the world truly is and all of my previous experiences of joy and happiness were naive and infantile and that things would never go back to how they were.

Eventually I secretly sought out a psychologist in close proximity to my home. I remember my parents only discovered I was seeing a psychologist when they sent a letter in the mail to me with the business' return address. I had been intentionally suffering in silence for 12 months at that time.

When I did get formally diagnosed with anxiety and depression by a psychologist and opened up to my friends and family, I was shocked at how many people had similar experiences and had hidden this from me due to stigma.

This is why I believe being a mental health ambassador is important. I'm able to share my lived experiences which will hopefully make others realise they're not alone in their struggles.

I only realised quite recently in September 2020 that I am transgender. The LGBTIQA+ community is especially vulnerable to mental health disorders. Here's some statistics I quickly found from beyond blue

- 19.2% of homosexual/bisexual Australians aged 16 to 85 have experienced an affective disorder in the last 12 months.This is more than triple the rate of heterosexual Australians (6.0%) aged 16 to 85
- 16% of LGBTI Australians aged between 16 and 27 have attempted suicide and 33% have self-harmed. Looking at transgender young people specifically, around 3 in every 4 transgender young people have experienced anxiety or depression, 4 out of 5 transgender young people have ever engaged in self-harm, and almost 1 in 2 have ever attempted suicide (48%)

There is not enough positive representation of trans people in the world and in Australia so I hope to be a positive role model for my community.