Identity Map Exercise

We all have a variety of different characteristics as well as identities that are associated with the different roles that we play.

Identities that are stigmatized, such as being mentally ill, are Othered by society. Society tends to see people who are Othered as only consisting of that single deviant identity. Rather than considering the many parts of us, they rely on stereotypes to create an idea of who we are.

When we self-stigmatize, we may see that mental illness identity as taking over our whole self, turning that whole self into something that's rejected by society.

This identity mapping exercise is about seeing the bigger picture and recognizing that while mental illness may affect many aspects of the self, it doesn't change who that core self is.

The first exercise is the identity map. This is where you can fill in the core, consistent parts of you.

The second exercise is to look at how something significant, either mental illness or something else that's significant in your life, can shape those various aspects of identity without fundamentally changing who you are.

Below are examples of my core identity map and the map showing the effects of my mental illness. What these show is a multi-faceted, unique person who is quite different from what stereotypes might say about me. While my illness affects many parts of me, I'm still the same person.

Identity Map

Roles
- Blogger
- Author
- Guinea pig mama
- Homeowner
- Mental health talker-abouter

Relationships
- Aunt
- Sister
- Daughter
- Friend
- Blogging buddy

Beliefs & Values
- Self-care is necessary
- It's okay to be different and imperfect
- Value tolerance, equality

Interests/Passions
- Guinea pigs
- Reading
- Blogging
- Learning new thngs

Personal Characteristics
- Canadian
- 40-something
- Former nurse & pharmacist
- Have depression

Sense of Self
- Introverted
- Independent
- Curious
- Science-minded

Effects of Mental Illness

Roles
- Less mental capacity to do things
- Roles can start to matter less
- What I can do in a day decreases

Relationships
- Withdraw
- Don't have enough mental resources
- Being around people feels like work
- Don't like people

Beliefs & Values
- Tend to think the world is a shitty place
- Value self-protection, and set firm limits

Interests/Passions
- Lose interest in most things except the guinea pigs
- Anhedonia
- Apathy

Personal Characteristics
- The way I speak, move, and express emotions on my face changes
- Hygiene decreases, I care less

Sense of Self
My core self sometimes feels difficult to access, but I know it still exists

Identity Map

Roles

Relationships

Beliefs & Values

Interests/Passions

Personal Characteristics

Sense of Self

Effects of Mental Illness

Roles

Relationships

Beliefs & Values

Interests/Passions

Personal Characteristics

Sense of Self

What else can affect you but isn't you?

Roles

Relationships

Beliefs & Values

Interests/Passions

Personal Characteristics

Sense of Self