

[00:00:00] **John Moe:** There's this picture that I keep in my office. I have it in front of me right now. Older man sitting in a chair. He's mostly bald, has glasses, suspenders. His left hand is up near his chin. He looks a little pensive, but also antsy like he wants to get out of that chair—which, knowing Jack, is probably what was happening when the picture was taken. He didn't want to just sit there. He wanted to get up and go paint some backdrops or build a set or direct some actors in some screwball comedy version of a play from the 1600s. Jack Fryman was the head of the theatre department where I went to college, and the theatre was where I spent almost all of my time.

I keep this photo to remember Jack and to remember those times. I had been dealing with depression for many years by the time I was in college, although I was still many years away from knowing that that's what was going on—that it had a name and that was it. All I knew was that I had this dark weirdness, this weird darkness that was always on my tail, always chasing me or just patiently waiting to get me and drag me down to a place that was painful and scary. But if I was in the theatre, it couldn't get me. If I was on stage acting or taking a class or building a set or just hanging out with my friends in that building, I was safe. A big part of the theatre being a safe space was how Jack ran things. It was perfectly designed for a young, depressed person who didn't even know he was depressed.

The theatre department, back then, mounted a whole lot of plays, and so one was kept busy. I auditioned for everything I could, and I was pretty good. So, I got cast a lot. That meant I had rehearsals nearly every night. And in addition to all that, I needed to study for my non-theatre classes. It was a liberal arts college, so I was studying all kinds of things. So, my time and my headspace were booked up. Very little time left for rumination. So, I just did stuff. I didn't think about myself much. Also, by doing a lot of plays, I was able to get this satisfaction of making something, presenting it to the world, and then tearing it down and moving on to the next thing. And by doing all these plays, period pieces, modern plays, the occasional musical, Shakespeares—by doing all these things, the mind expanded, and it was easy to find myself in a universe of delights instead of stuck inside my own terrible thoughts. A lot of plays is a great thing to do. If you read my memoir, *The Hilarious World of Depression*, you won't find anything about this time in my life, because it was the least depressed I ever was. Didn't have anything to say about it.

Now, as with any quasi-cult—which our theatre admittedly was—the department had a mythology to it, certain heroic figures. Jack was one of them. Nancy, another professor/director was too. And then, there was this other guy: a student who had graduated a couple years before I arrived, and people still talked about him constantly. He was said to be the best actor anyone had ever worked with or even seen. I mean, some of us thought we were pretty good, but this guy—Pat was his name—Pat was talked about as being in a different league than the rest of us. He played King Lear when he was a senior in college. 22 years old, and he took on Lear, and everyone was raving about his performance two years later when I showed up. I thought, man, this Pat fella must have been the happiest guy around—being that good an actor, being loved and respected by everyone, making people awestruck. But I didn't really know him, and I didn't know that he had been dealing with a deep depression for years and would continue to deal with mental illness for years to come through a career filled with yet more success and admiration.

And Pat wasn't an invented theatrical character. He's real. And he's here. Patrick Page is my guest on the show this week. It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you are here.

[00:04:22] **Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

[00:04:30] **John Moe:** If you're a fan of live theatre, you might have seen Patrick Page recently as Hades in *Hadestown* on Broadway. He was also the Green Goblin in the ill-fated *Spider-Man* musical, although critics loved him in that one and singled out his performance. He played the Grinch in Dr. Seuss's, *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. He plays a lot of bad guys, also played King Lear again—recently!—in Washington DC. On TV, you might've seen him as the baddy in the most recent season of the Hulu series *Schmigadoon!*. I talked with Patrick Page about depression, about substance use disorder, about acting, and about life.

[00:05:08] **Transition:** Relaxed guitar.

[00:05:15] **John Moe:** Patrick Page, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

[00:05:18] **Patrick Page:** Thank you very much! Nice to be here.

[00:05:20] **John Moe:** I have to ask, how are you doing today?

[00:05:24] **Patrick Page:** Ha-ha-ha-ha. I was just on a panel where they asked the same question. I'm doing great. Thank you. I just came from Pilates, which is—always makes me feel terrific.

[00:05:35] **John Moe:** Okay, great. When did depression make itself known in your life? How old? How old were you when it first came around?

[00:05:44] **Patrick Page:** Well, of course there's what one knows in retrospect and then what one knew at the time. In retrospect, it's clear to me that I became depressed when I was about five or six years old and remained so through at least the third grade, and then came out of it into a different kind of expression, which was—perhaps had some hypomania in it. But in terms of being able to identify that something was wrong as an adult, it's probably when I was about 27 years old.

[00:06:18] **John Moe:** Really? So, then what did it feel like in those intervening years? What was going on?

[00:06:24] **Patrick Page:** Oh, lots of up and down. Periods of tremendous energy and optimism, and then sometimes periods of lows. But when I was five, I had a period where I was incapacitated by something which nobody could identify at the time. But I couldn't go to school. And I didn't want to get out of bed, and I had physical pain in my legs. My depression has always—or frequently—had a physical pain element to it. And as I say, you know, the doctors and I certainly didn't have any equipment to know what was going on, and neither did the doctors in Eugene, Oregon at the time. Eventually, that passed. But then, when I was 27, I was hit very strongly with something that I just—I couldn't get past. I was incapacitated by the low of that depression and lost all joy, all appetite for life, all ambition, ability to do anything and sort of just longed to be—I remember my father was in the hospital recovering from a surgery, and I was going to direct a production of *Macbeth* in Portland, Oregon.

And I remember, as I was driving by Salem where I was in the hospital, thinking that I would give anything to switch places with him, to be the one who got to lie in the bed instead of going to direct this play—which of course, at another time, would be absolutely a joyful experience for me and something I would long to do. But when one is depressed—at least my experience is when I'm depressed, all appetite for anything joyful—relationships, sex, travel, it all is gone. And I've always thought Shakespeare gave the most stunning description of what I experienced, in *Hamlet* when Hamlet says, “I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all mirth. Forgone all custom of exercise. And it indeed—it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory.” And then he goes on to describe the other things which he knows are beautiful. “This goodly canopy, the air. Look, you, this most excellent firmament. And about the air.” And then he goes on to say, “And man is the most extraordinary, beautiful thing of all. And yet, I can find no joy in any of it.”

And that's my experience when I'm depressed. It just seems, “What's the point? There's not—why get out of bed? Why do anything?” And so, yes. So, that hit me then, and that was when I first began therapy to sort of untangle, well, what's going on? What's going on with me? I was living in Ashland, Oregon at the time.

[00:09:59] **John Moe:** So, is that when you were diagnosed with I guess bipolar type two, depression?

[00:10:05] **Patrick Page:** Yeah, at that time I think it was just diagnosed as depression. We didn't go into the bipolar element of it at that time. It wasn't until many years later, when I began confessing to my therapist about—well, I'd written a play in something like 48 hours, and I hadn't slept, and I was just on cloud nine. And that was how these spurts of creativity would come to me. They would come in these massive spurts that I would sort of wait for, and that was when they added a little something to my—by that time, my pharmaceutical regimen—that that helped level those out. But I think like anyone who has that experience, maybe others will recognize mine—I didn't want to tell my therapist about that, because of course it's the most wonderful experience when you're in that state. But it's quite dangerous, because you think—just as when you're depressed, you think nothing will succeed. When you're manic, you think nothing can fail. So, you take terrible risks. You spend, you know, unreasonable amounts of money as I did once. Because you think, “Well, more money will just be coming in! So, I can spend this. It doesn't matter.”

You might take—you might take very dangerous risks in your personal life or sexually or as I have done with drugs and with alcohol, because you think that consequences are not gonna be coming your way.

[00:11:44] **John Moe:** From an early age, did acting provide a refuge from the depression? Was it something that you sought out as a—I guess a coping mechanism?

[00:11:57] **Patrick Page:** I didn't in any conscious way, but certainly when I had—I wasn't acting as a child. And when I had something like that to focus on, I imagine that it was a kind of medicine for me. I don't remember the sequence of events when I was little. When I've been older, what I've noticed is that my depressions have tended to correspond with moments of success in my life. So, I will be moving towards some goal that is a kind of end goal for

myself, a certain rung on a ladder that's—let us say that is the peak of some mountain that I've been climbing for a while before I maybe go to the next mountain. And when I reach that peak, then what we've noticed—my doctors and I—is then the depression will hit, as if to say, “You mustn't enjoy this.” We've sort of untangled a narrative that has to do with guilt, with survivor's guilt, and that I—unconsciously, we think—and who knows about these narratives, you know, that one either uncovers or creates in psychotherapy. But the narrative that seemed to make some sense is that I didn't feel that I deserved that success on some unconscious level, and so I would be laid low by a depression.

[00:13:39] **John Moe:** So, would that happen after—because you've done a lot of live theatre. Would that happen after the show closed or would that happen, you know, after opening night and you get the curtain call, and everybody loves you?

[00:13:51] **Patrick Page:** It would happen during. So, for example, I wanted very much to—I began in New York to sort of be known for musicals, and I was very, very grateful for them. But I was known to begin with for somewhat—for lack of a better word, frivolous musicals. I loved them dearly. I don't mean to in any way disparage them, but for, say, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, and so on. And you know, I fancied myself a serious classical actor. And so, I wanted to make my name known in that way. And I was finally cast opposite Frank Langella, in *A Man for All Seasons*. And, wham-o, I got hit. You know, and then I muscled my way through that as well as I can. I didn't miss any shows, but I did drink an awful lot, which was one of my coping mechanisms for all of this. And I took a lot of pills. And similarly, I had been replacing people in roles on Broadway, but I hadn't created my own role. And then, I was offered the chance to create the role of the Grinch in Jack O'Brien's production of *The Grinch Stole Christmas*. And at that point when I got that—which was, again, sort of a new level—the top of a mountain before scaling a new one. And at that point I got hit very, very strongly, very badly.

And then, I wanted to create a Shakespearean performance, because I fancied myself a classical actor, a Shakespearean actor. I knew that was sort of my wheelhouse, but I'd not been given the opportunity to play a really meaty role in New York, and I was finally given that opportunity when I was cast as Claudius in *Hamlet*.

[00:15:41] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:15:43] **John Moe:** So, at this point, Patrick's been having a lot of success in big musicals. He played Scar in *The Lion King* on Broadway, Lumiere in *Beauty and the Beast*. But he thinks of himself as a classical actor, and now he's cast in *Hamlet*. Do you think depression will allow that to go well? As we go to break, here's Patrick Page as Hades in the musical, *Hadestown*, original Broadway cast recording. Song's called, “Hey, Little Songbird”.

[00:16:12] **Music:** “Hey, Little Songbird” from the musical *Hadestown*, performed by Patrick Page.

*Hey, little songbird*

*Give me a song*

*I'm a busy man, and I can't stay long*

*I've got clients to call*

*I've got orders to fill*

*I've got walls to build*

*I've got riots to quell*

*And they're giving me hell, back in Hades...*

[00:16:52] **Promo:**

**Music:** Upbeat, fun music.

**Emily Heller:** I am Emily Heller.

**Lisa Hanawalt:** And I'm Lisa Hanawalt.

**Emily Heller:** And we're the hosts of *Baby Geniuses*.

**Lisa Hanawalt:** We've been doing our podcast for over 10 years.

**Emily Heller:** When we started, it was about trying to learn something new every episode.

**Lisa Hanawalt:** Now it's about us trying to actively get stupider, and it's workiing!

**Emily Heller:** (*Laughs.*) Hang out with us, and you'll hear us chat about:

**Lisa Hanawalt:** Gardening.

**Emily Heller:** Horses.

**Lisa Hanawalt:** Various problems with our butts.

**Emily Heller:** And all the weird stuff that makes us horny.

**Lisa Hanawalt:** It's so weird, all that stuff.

*(Emily laughs.)*

*Baby Geniuses*, a show for adult idiots!

**Emily Heller:** Every other week, on Maximum Fun!

**Music:** *Baby geniuses, we know everything*

*Baby geniuses, tell us something we don't know*

*(Music ends.)*

[00:17:33] **Transition:** Hurried, staccato acoustic guitar.

[00:17:37] **John Moe:** Back with actor Patrick Page. When last we left him, he had a very problematic depressive disorder and had been cast as Claudius in *Hamlet*.

*(Music ends.)*

[00:17:48] **Patrick Page:** I did it for a new audience, directed by David Sjogren, and I began to feel this coming on in the early weeks of rehearsal. And in fact, I went to David and said, "Listen." Because I can usually tell about a week in advance, oh, damnit, here comes this thing. And I said to him, "You know, I'm okay today, but I have a feeling in a few days I'm not gonna be okay. I think perhaps you should replace me."

And he said that, "I can't! There's no way. I can't replace you at this point."

And I said, "Okay, I'll do my best." And then one day in rehearsal, we were in the first scene, and I suddenly just hear this sound like a siren. And it was me. I had fallen and started sobbing and crying hysterically, and I just kept saying, "I need a doctor. I need a doctor. I need a doctor." And my friend, Chris Jones, took me into the other room, and they waited, and they took me to the doctor. Unfortunately, that was the one time I did have to drop out of a show. I wasn't able to continue in that show. I guess that's what they used to call in the old days a nervous breakdown.

[00:19:01] **John Moe:** What happened then with your—? You went to the doctor, and what did they say?

[00:19:06] **Patrick Page:** Uh, well, up to that point, I had resisted taking any SSRIs. Because I was of the mind that if I were to take antidepressants, they would flatten my affect, and I wouldn't have as much access to my emotions and that it would make me so that I couldn't act. It was—it's actually quite an extraordinary story, because they were trying to—I had two doctors at the time. Dr. Kent Robertson and Dr. Alma Canefield. And they were—and of course, my wife Paige Davis. And they were all saying, "Patrick, you must—you really must—you must do this or you're not gonna make it." And I just was adamant that I didn't want to take these things. And I got this letter from the actor who was playing the ghost of Hamlet's father—an actor I quite admired. And he, as everyone in the cast had—it was a full run through of the play for a designer's run of the play. So, not only the full cast was in the room when that happened, but the artistic director and the designers and everyone. So, it was not great timing.

But this lovely actor was there, and he wrote me this letter saying, “Listen, I don't know what's going on with you, but it seems to me that you may have the same illness I have. And if you do it, it may be that you have the same fear that I had, which is that if you were to take antidepressants, it would keep you from being able to work. And I'm here to tell you that that's not true, that since I've been on these antidepressants, I still have access to my emotions. I just don't have crying jags on the subway anymore. I don't break down. And they'll actually make your work better.” And it was an absolutely beautiful letter and precisely what I needed to hear. And I couldn't—I couldn't hear that from my doctors or my wife. I had to hear it from another actor, and I had to hear it from an actor I admired. And that was why I began speaking about it, because I thought there may be other people out there who need to hear it from an artist, from an actor, to say, “Yes, I take antidepressants.”

And it was interesting, because immediately after that, the next role I played was Cyrano de Bergerac, at the Old Globe. And I was terrified, because if there's ever a role one needs full access to the spectrum of one's emotions, it's Cyrano de Bergerac.

[00:21:56] **John Moe:** He's all emotions!

[00:21:58] **Patrick Page:** And so, I was beginning to take this. And as anyone who's been on antidepressants knows, it's an art to find the right dosage, the right mixture of SSRIs. Frequently there's a cocktail of more than one. And you just don't know, because you can—there's no way we can sort of cut open the brain. They don't know yet how to look at the brain and say, “Aha! This person needs this combination!” So, it's sort of trial and error for a while. And we went through this trial and error with me, and at first I got very lethargic, and I gained 20 pounds and couldn't feel anything. And then, we tried other things. And eventually, we got something that was right. And what I found was, as an actor, that in fact because my emotions had been so on the surface, I had really been generalizing a lot as an actor, because I was so easily able to flip into an emotion that the moment-to-moment work, the listening, the responding, hadn't been as precise as it needed to be. And once my emotions were sort of more in the normal range, my work got in fact much, much better.

You know, Bobby Lewis, great acting teacher, used to say, “You know, if crying on cue was the mark of a great actor, then my Aunt Esther was the best actor in the world.” You know, and that was what I could do. And so, (*laughs*) I sort of would do it whenever I felt, you know, a bit unsure as an actor. It's like a card trick, you know? A party trick. And so, it actually made me much, much better. And I still feel things. Now we do—I have to, in full disclosure, say my psychiatrist and I do work with the medication depending on what I'm playing. So, for example, I just played King Lear, and we worked to bring the dosage down as far as we possibly could safely so that I had a wider spectrum and easier access, and I was in a very good place psychologically and emotionally. So, we both felt pretty comfortable doing that.

[00:24:31] **John Moe:** What does King Lear require then that you needed to get access to?

[00:24:37] **Patrick Page:** Uh, rage. Unbelievable grief. The loss of one's daughter and the feeling that you are the cause of her death. Unimaginable suffering that I needed access to eight times a week, you know. And so, if you take on a role like that and you take it seriously, you are going to be putting yourself through hell. I mean, and your body doesn't know the

difference between the imagined circumstance and the real circumstance. That is, if you are doing the work. Now, you can pretend to do it, of course. You can put your hand over your face. You can do false sobs just as you can do a false laugh, but a real laugh or real grief is going to take its toll. And I don't think it's probably safe to play a role like that over a prolonged period under those conditions. For me. Might be for others. And there's always a time for me after I played one of these parts of disentangling from that process. And I tend to not take that seriously enough.

So, when we came out of *Lear*, for example, I sort of like—you know—shook the dust from my shoes and moved forward. And over the next month or six weeks, I realized that I needed a more conscious way of leaving that behind me and moving forward. And so, I mean that's a process I do with my psychiatrist.

[00:26:29] **John Moe:** I don't know what your approach is to acting or what school of thought, and I don't want to get too much deep into the weeds of the schools of thought of acting, but do you pull from your own experiences with depression when you're playing a Hamlet or a King Lear? Do you—?

[00:26:45] **Patrick Page:** Yeah. Yes, yes, yes, of course.

[00:26:47] **John Moe:** How does that work?

[00:26:49] **Patrick Page:** Well, it's—

[00:26:50] **John Moe:** Is like a sense memory thing or what are you doing?

[00:26:52] **Patrick Page:** No, not so much sense—well, I suppose there is sense memory involved, but just automatic. But you know, for example, in *King Lear*, the terror of losing one's mind is very real to me. So, I can experience—I can call up that terror very easily. And then, I need to have some conscious mechanism. I meditate and pray and some other things to let my unconscious mind know that in fact that was make believe this time. This time, that was make believe. Or if not make believe, that it was on purpose. Because of course, the terror is real.

[00:27:38] **John Moe:** Right. How do you keep that healthy? How do you keep that something manageable on stage that doesn't screw up any kind of trauma that you're still processing in in regular life?

[00:27:53] **Patrick Page:** I think it's conscious work with my doctor. We talk about it a lot. And also, through journaling. I journal every morning about it. Through prayer, by keeping conscious contact with that which is invisible but always operating. Well, we'll talk about it in precisely the way we're talking about it now, I guess. And then I did a ceremony, which I didn't realize was a kind of laying down of *Lear*, but it turned out to have been one. I work with a person who's an expert in rituals of psychedelics And I worked with her after *King Lear*, and I hadn't really thought that it was going to be to do with the character, but when I was in the middle of this process with the medicine, I realized it was very much about the laying down of that character.



[00:28:55] **John Moe:** Do you pull from the depression when you're playing—I enjoyed *Schmigadoon!* very much—but these characters that have a darkness about them, whether they're an Iago, you know, classical villain type of character or whether it's something a little more light, like *Schmigadoon!*. Do you pull from your own darkness for bad guys?

[00:29:21] **Patrick Page:** Well, it depends on the guy. Like in *Schmigadoon!*, no. *Schmigadoon!* is a parody. So, the character is a kind of a parody of an archetype. It's a parody of Hannibal Lecter or a parody of Hades in *Hadestown*. So, the work I do in *Hadestown*, for example, I just kind of take it a few notches further and put a bit of a spin on it for *Schmigadoon!*, you know. But what I would say about depression is I think it can—the gift of depression is, I think, a gift of empathy. That it is a kind of suffering. I heard Dick Cavett say, you know, “Depression is such a wrong word for it. Depression. It sounds like a little, you know, concave groove in a road. A little depression.” And he said, “This is—you know, this is a tidal wave. This is something I wouldn't wish on Goebbels or Hitler.” And I find that to be true.

And so, there are characters who are dealing with depression. Hamlet is a key example. I played Hamlet when I was 30, precisely the age Hamlet is in the play. And I wasn't aware of any depression when I was playing him, or I was very activated by it, but I had just gone through a depression. And then, immediately upon closing Hamlet, I fell into a deep depression. But I mean, everything you go through in your life, it feeds every role. So, I suppose the answer is yes.

[00:31:13] **John Moe:** It's all in the toolbox, I suppose.

[00:31:15] **Patrick Page:** It's all in the toolbox. And what I mean by empathy is when you're playing a dark character, the main tool you have in your box is your empathy. You must come from that person's point of view entirely, without judgment. And so, if one has suffered and if one has erred or sinned, then you have more empathy for someone who is in error, as villains are in error. You know, they're making a mistake about what works in the world, in terms of the moral construct of the play. Richard III is making an error. He thinks he's right until the fifth act, when he finds out he's wrong. You know, Macbeth is sort of unique in that way, because Macbeth always knows he's wrong. But he can't—he keeps going anyway, and that's what makes a play, I think, among the greatest things ever written. Because in a standard drama, you are going to have a protagonist and an antagonist, and they'll go at one another in some way, and eventually the protagonist will prevail, if it's a heroic journey.

In *Macbeth*, that's all inside the one man. The protagonist and the antagonist are both inside Macbeth's soul, and they're fighting with each other. William Faulkner said in his Nobel Prize speech, he said, “The only thing truly worth writing about is the human heart in conflict with itself.” And that seemed to me right. There's something very precise about that. And that's Macbeth. And of course, that's Hamlet as well. Claudius is this external antagonist, but the real battle is going on inside Hamlet's soul.

[00:33:19] **Transition:** Gentle acoustic guitar.

[00:33:20] **John Moe:** Just ahead, we'll talk about Patrick Page's sobriety and what that's meant for his work and his life. As we go to break, here's a little taste of Patrick in the Hulu

series *Schmigadoon!*, which is a comedic parody of old musicals and their archetypes. He plays the baddy. The song is “Two Birds with One Stone”.

[00:33:38] **Music:** “Two Birds with One Stone” from the TV show *Schmigadoon!*.

*... will turn out for the best*

*Maybe this one will be smarter than the rest*

*And I will no longer be alone!*

*Maybe we can kill two birds with one stone*

*Maybe we can kill two birds with one*

*Birds with one, birds with one stone*

*(Music ends.)*

[00:34:09] **Promo:**

**Music:** Upbeat, high-energy music.

*(Three bell dings. The crowd cheers)*

**Hal Lublin:** *(Announcer voice.)* The following pro wrestling contest is scheduled for one fall! Making their way to the ring from the *Tights and Fights* podcast are the baddest trio of audio, the hair to beware, Danielle Radford!

**Danielle Radford:** *(Gruffly.)* It really is great hair!

**Hal:** The Brit with a permit to hit, Lindsey Kelk.

**Lindsey Kelk:** The queen is dead; long live the queen!

**Hal:** And the fast-talking, fist-clocking Hal Lubliiiiiin! *(Sweetly, as himself.)* See? I can wrestle and be an announcer!

**Danielle:** Get ready for *Tights and Fights*!

**Lindsey:** Listen every Saturday or face the pain.

**Hal:** *(Announcer voice.)* Find us on Maximum Fun! Now, ring the bell!

*(Ding! Ding! Ding!)*

[00:34:54] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:34:56] **John Moe:** Back with actor Patrick Page.

*(Music ends.)*

You've recently talked on Facebook about your sobriety. And if you're being public about it, I feel comfortable asking: what led to the decision to get sober?

[00:35:17] **Patrick Page:** I guess the same thing that leads most people is you hit some kind of bottom. I'd given up drinking a number of times and and thought, "Well, I can manage this." And then come back and thinking, "Well, you know, I can have a drink now and then." It would get out of control. What's funny is I never drank when I was in high school or college. I didn't even drink in my 30s to speak of. It wasn't until much later. At first, I became addicted to opiates in the '90s. And that lasted for about 10 years, and when I no longer had that addiction—when I finally got off of those, which is terribly, terribly, terribly difficult to get off of opiates. When I did that, I think then my drinking accelerated into alcoholism. And they were all coping mechanisms, you know, self-medication. And it was before I was on antidepressants, and then I was—as I think a lot of drunks are—in complete denial that I had a problem. Because I never missed work, and I didn't—you know, I hadn't yet had—I hadn't made page six, you know, for drunken behavior or anything like that.

*(They chuckle.)*

But of course, it was absolute horror for my wife, Paige. And eventually she—you know, she told me, "Look, this is it. I'm dying here. I can't take this anymore." And it took me a little while after she told me that, but eventually I faced up to it. And one night, I had gotten so drunk that I somehow cracked open my head. Now, I don't remember how. But it was June 17th, three years ago. And I don't know if I fell and cracked it open or if I ran into the corner of a wall and cracked it open. But I later woke up in bed and with the butterfly bandages over the scar. And you know, the next day I said, "Well, that's, that's it. I have to quit." And then I quit. I started going to meetings, and you know, that first step is to admit you're powerless. 'Cause up to that point, I hadn't done that first step to say, "Oh, I can't handle this."

[00:38:01] **John Moe:** Yeah. Well, congratulations on that. How has sobriety affected your depression?

[00:38:10] **Patrick Page:** Well, I haven't been depressed since I've been sober. I've had a couple times where I've been very moody. But I tend to be a little moody, and I've never understood my moods. So, I've tried to come to accept that, to say, "You know, today I don't want to see any people. Tomorrow, I—" And it's very frustrating for Paige, because she'll say, "Would you like to go such and such—you know, to such and such dinner on Sunday?"

And I'll say, "I don't know. 'Cause I don't know who I'll be on that day for sure. I would love to be able to commit right now, but I honestly don't know." Now, part of that has been—I

think probably as a result of the drug abuse, I lost most of my hearing. So, I only have about 20% hearing. I wear hearing aids, and they help. But in a restaurant or a situation or a bar like that, it's still very difficult for me to keep up with the conversation and to communicate. So—and that can cause me anxiety, which then, you know, it's a cycle. So, depending on how competent I feel (*laughs*) on any given day, I think, “Well, I'm up for, I'm up for that challenge tonight, or I'm not.” You know, and I just have to try to be honest with her and with myself about that.

[00:39:38] **John Moe:** Is it harder to know what your true feelings are, because you spend so much time acting, because you spend so much time kind of realizing the emotional world of this character that you're playing?

[00:39:52] **Patrick Page:** I think that was true when I didn't really know how to act. I mean, when I was younger and I thought acting was a kind of game of pretend and showing off, I think that those qualities were also present in my interactions with people and in my life. When I matured and I realized that acting was about completely leaving oneself alone and being responsive, listening to a partner in a moment, then there's no confusion between the make believe and what I do on stage and where I am in life. In fact, they both—you know, when you become better as an actor, you become better as a human being. Because the very qualities that make you a good actor—which are the ability to listen, the ability to be present, the ability to know what you're feeling.

I remember when I first went into therapy, and I would give my therapist all of these thoughts and opinions, and she would say, “Yes, but how do you feel?” And it was a baffling question to me! Because I've been running from my feelings so much. So, to know and to be okay with how one feels—well, how do I feel? I'm angry or I'm nervous or I—

“Why are you angry?”

I'm not sure. I don't know. I'm angry today. Maybe I read something this morning that made me angry. I can't remember, but I'm angry, or I'm sad, or I'm anxious.

[00:41:37] **John Moe:** When you look to the future and you look to managing your mental health, what are your goals? What are you hoping that the future holds?

[00:41:45] **Patrick Page:** Well, number one: to stay sober. Number two: to increase my—always be on a journey of increasing my presence, my ability to be present in the moment. And service, because when I'm in service to something, I'm not depressed. I'm not—I think depression, when you're depressed, the word that keeps going through your head is “I, I, I, I”. I feel, I feel, buh-buh-buh. And when you're in service to something, which has always been the great thing about being on stage—the fact of the matter is I've been so fortunate to be working. And so that even if I'm depressed—let's say I was doing *The Lion King* and I was depressed, but I knew that that evening there would be a family in that audience and that that family, let's say, was a mother and a father and two children, and that each of those tickets cost \$150. So, they'd spent \$600, and that wasn't even—and then, they'd perhaps traveled miles to get here. And then, they'd put so many hopes and expectations in hearing that this was not just a good show but a great show. And they have all of this hope and expectation and investment, and I get to be the servant that delivers.

And so, that lifts me. So, when I hear young people who feel that the workload of the theatre is too onerous, it's hard for me to understand their point of view, because it's always been a great balm for me.

[00:43:32] **John Moe:** Hmm. Because you're in service, because you're—

[00:43:35] **Patrick Page:** Because I'm in service. Yes.

[00:43:37] **John Moe:** You're doing more than just putting on a show.

[00:43:41] **Patrick Page:** Correct.

[00:43:43] **John Moe:** Patrick Page. Thank you so much for your insight and thank you so much for your time.

[00:43:48] **Patrick Page:** Thank you.

[00:43:52] **Music:** “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

[00:43:58] **John Moe:** Patrick Page's one man play, *All the Devils are Here*, opens off-Broadway at the end of September. It's an exploration of Shakespeare villains.

Next time on *Depresh Mode*, Maria Bamford is one of the funniest comedians in the world. She's also an admitted cult member.

[00:44:17] **Maria Bamford:** You know, the cult can be Target Shopper. It's a collective of people who have a bizarre set of beliefs that they adhere to at whatever intensity. So, I have belonged to many 12-step cults. I was also in religion—also a cult—of Episcopalianism. You know, these are looser cults, but they still fit you snugly like a diaper holding in a poop.

[00:44:47] **John Moe:** Hey, if people donate to the show, we can keep having *Depresh Mode*. If they don't and if they stop, then the show goes away. Let's not make the show go away. We're having too much fun. We're learning too much. It's easy to donate. All you have to do is go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join), find a level that works for you, and pick *Depresh Mode* from the list of shows. Then, you're helping out the show. If you've already joined, thank you. You are making all of this possible. We have merchandise. Check out our merch store. We got t-shirts, we got mugs, we got blankets, we got all kinds of things available at [MaxFunStore.com](https://MaxFunStore.com). That's [MaxFunStore.com](https://MaxFunStore.com). Check out our collection. A lot of things say, “I'm glad you're here” on them, which is just a good thing to have around in your life. Be sure to hit subscribe. Give us five stars, write rave reviews.

The Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available 24/7 in the United States by calling 988. The Crisis Text Line, also free and always available. Text “home” to 741741.

Our Instagram and Twitter are @DepreshPod. If you're on Facebook, look up our mental health discussion group, Preshies, and join up with that. Lots of good conversation happening there. Some of it about the show, some of it just about people helping each other out in life. Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is available on Substack. Search that up. I'm on Twitter [@JohnMoe](#) and Instagram [@JohnMoe](#). Our electric mail address is [depreshmode@maximumfun.org](mailto:depreshmode@maximumfun.org).

Hi, credits listeners, I didn't know voices could get as low as Patrick Page's. (*Dropping his pitch.*) Maybe I'll start using that voice myself. Maybe not, (*returning to his usual voice*) because I'm not very good at it.

*Depresh Mode* is made possible by your contributions. The show is produced by Gabe Mara. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song building wings.

[00:46:43] **Music:** "Building Wings" by Rhett Miller.

*I'm always falling off of cliffs, now  
Building wings on the way down  
I am figuring things out  
Building wings, building wings, building wings*

*No one knows the reason  
Maybe there's no reason  
I just keep believing  
No one knows the answer  
Maybe there's no answer  
I just keep on dancing*

(*Music continues under the dialogue.*)

[00:47:19] **Beth:** Hi, this is Beth from Brooklyn, and this world is better with you in it.

[00:47:26] **John Moe:** *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now.

(*Music fades out.*)

[00:47:40] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[00:47:41] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[00:47:42] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[00:47:43] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[00:47:45] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[00:47:46] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[00:47:47] **Speaker 6:** —by you!