

The 3T's – Turning the Tide of Suicide

Coping With and Surviving Depression

Evening Lecture Series 2004

Transcript

Mannix Flynn Lecture

Held On

Thursday 10th June, 2004

At

Holiday Inn Dublin City Centre

98-107 Pearse Street

Dublin 2

www.holidayinndublincitycentre.ie

Coping With and Surviving Depression Evening Lecture Series 2004

**Mannix Flynn Lecture
Thursday 10th June, 2004**

Introduction by Professor Kevin Malone:

Good Evening and welcome to Holiday Inn Dublin City Centre. My name is Kevin Malone, I'm head of Psychiatry at UCD and work at St. Vincent's Hospital but that's not why I'm here tonight. About 18 months ago we started a project which is not going to stop and it's called Turning the Tide of Suicide in Ireland and obviously these things start small and gradually we build momentum. One of the important things we thought to do was to reach out to the public in a novel way that can connect because it's a very sterile debate, the whole issue of turning the tide of suicide so we thought one of the ways to reach out to people was to see if we could get people with influence who would be willing to stand and share their story about surviving and coping with depression and we have been very, very fortunate in the personalities that have been willing to stick their neck out and come and talk and for those in the audience, many who are suffering and in pain and have personal experience in a variety of ways, to bear witness and that gives us a certain intangible strength, we don't know what kind of strength that gives but we certainly think that its been a powerful way for us to get people to say, yes we have to turn the tide of suicide, it's not enough to just talk about it.

So tonight we have with us someone who has openly acknowledged in the past his struggle with depression and coping with and surviving depression and there are so many ways I could introduce Mannix Flynn who is our speaker tonight but Mannix said just say I'm an artist. From our point of view it's really important to reach into the artists community, in fact all communities, and to have someone say, I'm an artist, I'm willing to stand up and tell my story if you think that's going to help. So we have tonight on our spring lecture series for 2004, the last lecture in this series, we have another series beginning in the autumn coming up. It's my great pleasure to introduce Mr. Mannix Flynn, unplugged and uncensored.

Mannix Flynn: My name is Gerard Mannix Flynn and I'm going to have a chat with you for the next 45 minutes, if I can get up on this stool. I just want to say you're very welcome and I think we're probably in the safest place in the country tonight.

I'm going to share a couple of things about my own life and basically try and give some sort of shape on certain moods that affect my life on a daily basis. I suppose the best way to start is I'll start with this morning. This morning I woke up at about 8 o'clock, I looked around the room and I pulled the blankets over my head and went back to sleep. Then I woke up again and I turned on TV3 and I thought, I'm going back to bed. So I went back to bed and I don't often do that because when I do that I don't want to get out of bed, because I have the condition where I can get mild depression and I have a struggle every day to get out of bed and I have to watch because every day that I get out my whole journey is to get back there. That's the whole day, get back to bed, safe, as I possibly can.

I like the safety of bed because I go to sleep. There's sometimes when I go to sleep and I say to myself, I don't want to wake up. That's just the way it is, I don't necessarily have to be depressed or nothing in particular has to happen in my day to warrant that, you know, I don't have to have a bad day or a good day or a lousy day, that's what I deal with, that's what I live with on a daily basis. And that's okay because I got out of the bed today and I'm here and I've been managing to do that quite successfully for the last 47 years.

In my life I have been in many institutions. The first institution I remember being in was my family. There were 17 of us in two rooms in a block of flats in Dublin, and it was mayhem from morning to night, that amount of personalities all vying for nurture and attention. No two people can nurture that amount of children with that amount of needs so the big parent moved into my life which is the State, and because I didn't want to go to school, because I didn't think there was any reason to go, I got sent to all the industrial schools. In the industrial schools there was the usual gang of loco parents, they were atrocious, these people knew nothing about children and it was a very punitive place and it was a place where you weren't allowed express your feelings. So everything manifested itself in a depressed fashion and so that's the way my life was until I was about 20 as I went through the system.

During the course of that 20 years I had many attempts on my own life, I had many situations where I self-harmed. I like that word self-harm, it kind of makes it all very smooth, like something you get in Brown Thomas, you know, put that on my cheque card please. Basically, what I did was I damaged myself and before I damaged myself physically, I damaged myself emotionally and mentally, all of those things and they were all manifest themselves for quite some time. I learned later on that they were a cry for help and they were a peculiar way of trying to nurture myself, it's peculiar but that's the way it manifested itself out.

Without going into details of any particular situation, this condition that I had was a clever condition because it was able to jump and manifest itself in many forms. My depression manifested itself in it's most extreme through alcoholism and it never allowed me to get beyond. The idea of trying to have a life beyond it or that there was some magic thing going to come into my life and remove it from me, was what kept me drunk and kept me angry. What I didn't know was anything about myself and I didn't know anything about my condition.

Events changed in my life when I became an artist and I did plays on the Olympia stage and all those things but my condition followed me and it got worse. In drinking I felt a great sense of terrible shame about my life which triggered the idea of actually it would be really honourable and the right thing to do to take my life. So every time I went out to have a drink I never went out to get drunk but I ended up drunk and once I ended up in that condition I ended up really disliking myself. It was the total opposite and I was trying to cope with this and I was putting it down to the fact that I was in all the institutions and all the various things that happened to me and blaming this one and that one and the socio-economic situation, there wasn't a good government and there wasn't a good church, the country was too small, it wasn't green enough, all the usual stuff. But what it did was I didn't want to change.

Five years ago I was in a terrible, terrible condition, and as far as I was concerned I'd become a shameless person and I set out to get myself well, apologise to all those I had hurt and then I was going to kill myself. Something happened along the road in the sense that what I decided to do was I decided to try and get well. I didn't know how I was going to do this but I decided I'd try and get well and I

decided I'd tackle my problems one at a time. The first one was my alcoholism. I thought that once I'd put down the drink I'd be grand but it wasn't, the drinking was just a symptom. I had massive self-nurture problems, I had massive anger problems. When I went back in over my past, I had to right, right back into my childhood, I had to go back in to mirroring, I was blue in the face from having to go right back and trying to figure out what happened in my life. I had to go through my parents, what happened to them, what happened in the state, who I was, I had to reclaim areas of my life I didn't even know existed and all of this was just to help me get through a day. Because my drinking wasn't about just going out and having a pint and a small one and having a chat, my drinking was attempts at suicide and when I look back over it I put myself into so much danger that the only thing that was between me and six feet under was a God.

I'm not a mad religious person but I do believe that someone or something protected me from that situation otherwise I certainly wouldn't be here today and I'd have nothing to talk about.

Today I live in the solution. The solution is that I can wake up tomorrow morning and recognise I have a bit of depression and spend another two hours in bed. There was no reason for me to jump out of the scratcher this morning, there was nobody waiting for me, so it was okay to nurture myself in that fashion. I got up about 11.30, I had the water on for a shower, I didn't have a shower, I just went about my day and did the things I was supposed to do, and I got here. That's what it helps me do. I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't drug, I live my life according to a spiritual programme. It assists me to live on a daily basis because my condition can really affect me and it affects me in the sense that I can sabotage my well-being very quickly.

A few weeks ago I was walking by St. Stephens Green and saw a police woman and I looked at her uniform and she had two safety pins holding up the bottom of her trousers and I got outraged. My mind was working like, I'm going to go up to this person and say who do you think you are in that uniform and the state of it with all of those safety pins and I was going to complain about her. I kept following her and she kept looking back at me thinking, whats going on here ? And I had to realise very quickly that I had a condition, call it alcoholism, call it depression, running after

other people and diverting from myself, and I was, isn't that terrible that uniform, you know, her there in that situation, that should be complained about, that's the way I was, I had to drag myself away from her.

Four years ago I would've been screaming at that person and I would've ended up in the Bridewell locked up and I would've been telling people isn't that terrible about the uniform because I'd loads of excuses and I was in love with my condition. I was in love with my condition.

I sometimes look at my arms and in my arms and on my body are various marks and all of them, bar a couple of baton marks on my head, are all brought about by myself. When I mean brought about by myself, I mean they happen by my hand but underneath my hand and guiding my hand was a condition, a condition that I developed which was not of my making but it's my responsibility today, I'm responsible for my well being today. I don't know when I'm going to lift it with drink, I don't know when I'll lift it with drugs, I don't know when these things are going to happen in my life, I don't know what I'm faced with on a daily basis. All I know is that my life today is based on one principal, the principal is the primary purpose is to stay well. That's what I try and do today I try and stay as well as I can, I try to be of assistance to myself and if I'm assistance to myself I'm definitely going to be of assistance to somebody else along the road. That's where I am at this particular point.

Saying all those kind of situations, I have written about my life, I have performed aspects of my life and I live in Gerard Flynn today. Saying all those situations and saying all those things, I have as much of my condition and my abilities and disabilities today as I ever had. My diseases are as healthy as I am and I'm primed all the time for self-sabotage. The computer doesn't work, I want to smash it up and throw it into the river, the door doesn't open quick enough, get rid of the door, that's the way it is with me I have to continually stop and I have to centre myself. During the four years I worked with a lot of counsellors, they were 12 step counsellors. The 12 step programme is a programme I believe can be used right across the board in all areas of initiating a person to get well. The main problem that was pointed out to me was that I was terrified of staying present. I didn't know what they were talking about. Every time they said to me how are you, I'd say very well. And then they

said to me how are you feeling and I used to answer, well. But that was how I was thinking, I didn't know how I was feeling. When I really examined how I was feeling I was feeling lousy but I wanted to run from that feeling so all of the ingredients of drinking, of drugging and basically behaving in a fashion that was very dangerous, really dangerous, was all about this.

So I had to go back and I had to find a safe place within myself. I had to ask people for help and I had to allow myself to be helped, I had to learn to receive the situation. In the course of the journey to that part I had to go back over a lot of lives that I lived. A lot of the people I was in the industrial schools with are dead, a lot of them didn't make it, some took their own lives, some of their lives were taken. I had to go back. A lot of friends of mine committed suicide, took their own lives, on a regular basis I hear of people who did the ultimate and took their own lives. On a regular basis I hear of people who have gone back drinking and are in the process of taking their own lives. It was extremely difficult in my life to let go of all that, to learn how to live my life, learn how to assist people who are willing to be assisted and to find the people who wanted me to assist them to live.

When I was coming here today I was thinking, how close am I going to get in this room ? Am I going to surface this issue or am I going to go to the marrow of the issue ? I don't know anybody out there, I'm only heading in a direction where we can all feel safe in the room and feel that what I'm actually saying is of deep significance. Because I need to touch base all the time with the issue, every day I have to touch base with my issue, every day I have to look over my shoulder and know where I came from and what I survived. And that's a difficult situation because that involves a moving on and a letting go.

I had two brothers that were killed, it wasn't easy but I had to let it go because I had to learn along the road if I didn't let it go, all of the issues that were holding me in an area that was going to ultimately take my life, if I didn't let go of them I was doomed. That doesn't mean to say that I closed the door on them, that I want to forget about, I don't forget about them, they sustain me because they are only in another dimension to me, I talk to them on a daily basis and I thank them for assisting me. I don't think when I wake up in the morning that I should be dead because of my journey. I spent the best part of 20 years in horrific places. When I

was 15 years of age in Dundrum for the criminally insane, they certified me insane, they told me it was merely a transfer document, all of those things are very real in my life today. The reason why they are real in my life today is because I made them real, because beforehand they were almost like a joke, they were something I was constantly running from, Mountjoy Prison, St. Patricks Institution and all the hospitals and all the police, they were all a game. Falling in and out of early morning houses, taking dope, cutting my arms, it was all a mirage, another reality. In order to survive and live on a daily basis I had to take ownership of my condition.

Today I own my depression - it doesn't own me. Hence I can make a decision to spend two hours extra in bed. I don't have to do that, I want to do it. There was a time when I couldn't get out of bed, there was a time when I didn't care where I woke up, there was a time when I didn't care what happened to me. I have all my conditions but my conditions don't have me. It is terribly essential that I know what is wrong with me and that I stay in touch with that because that is ultimately who I am. I don't know whether members of my family know me, I don't know whether anybody knows me more than I know me, because I stay totally in constant contact with myself and with the solution.

The solution to my daily living is that I hand it over, I ask the atmosphere out there to look after me, I ask a God to protect me, that I don't sabotage, that I don't scream at somebody, that I don't get furious. Because I can get furious. A few weeks ago I'm crossing the road and I see a man in a four wheel drive, he has his car parked directly over where the pedestrians are supposed to walk. There's a man coming by on a Zimmer frame, he won't reverse to let this man pass. My first instinct is to jump through the window, grab the man and bounce him off the ground. The next thing that comes into my head is you can't do that, you're a member of the Board of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, you're a respected artist and you're barred from Mountjoy prison. That's what's going through my head.

Five years ago that wouldn't have been going through my head, what would've been going through my head would be the resounding sound of ash from the local Garda hitting me on the head and getting me into a squad car, that's what would've happened and that was normal to me, that was the normal situation, it was totally normal. So my condition was so smart and so clever that for me to sit and cut my

arms or to contemplate suicide was as normal as having breakfast, until it became a situation where it became deeply painful and I was lucky enough to ask for help.

So as I say, it didn't go away for me, I have to deal with it on a continuous basis. I passed my neighbourhood on another day and I see the whole place being sold off, I see the Royal College of Surgeons buying York Street flats, moving out the people and building another multi-storey car park and I get furious and again, I have to recognise that what I'm thinking is correct but my response is, watch out, because my response to things is not really a levelled out response, I go very high or very low. In between hand is where me and the solution meet.

In a lot of respects what I had to learn about myself in letting go of those situations which were my great companion. My disease in full flight was a tremendous companion because I could do anything, because I was full of self will, shameless action and no consequence because I didn't care. I have to mourn that on a daily basis. Because when I crossed that traffic light and your man flew by in his four wheel drive, a little part of me died because I didn't get at him. A little part of me died, you know what I mean, but in order to get on and in order to progress, because I have to make progress, I have to do that, because if I don't make progress the guys and the women who are in the prisons today, the people who have the same condition as I have, won't see a light out. That's where I am today, I do my best on a daily basis to honour myself. I do that whole business to thine own self be true, I have to do those things because literally on my shoulder here as if it was yesterday, is Letterfrack and on the other shoulder is Daingan, Mountjoy Prison, St. Patricks Institution, Dundrum and all the terrible things that entered my life and the one thing that is running through them all is my part in my downfall, that's what kept me in there all the time.

The police and the prison wardens and the Christian Brothers, and the doctors in Dundrum didn't come looking for me, they didn't go around with a net, they let me go many years ago, but at 20 years of age I got linked back into that situation through my condition, I couldn't move on, I didn't have the skills, I didn't have the coping mechanisms, I didn't know how to deal with my life. I thought I had a drinking problem when I had chronic alcoholism, I didn't know anything about it, I thought I was a bit down when I actually had depression. I thought that I was

actually scarring myself when I wasn't I was actually losing pints of blood. I thought I was having a protest when I threw myself in front of a bin lorry. This was a constant situation and each time I woke up out of those horrors I said I'm never doing that again. I went around to everybody and said I'm really sorry, sorry for breaking your window, sorry for jumping in front of your truck, I don't know how many policemen I made Sergeants, they're the only ones that miss me. But that's the way it was I went around constantly saying I was sorry but I took no responsibility, I made no effort to change. I'd be grand, I'd have a new suit, new clothes, people would say, you're looking splendid, looking fabulous, you know the last time I saw you I had to throw you out of the pub, you were living in a skip and a bin, you looked terrible, you had blood all over your face and you were jumping out the window. And I'd say ah yeah but it's grand now, look at me, new shirt and tie, doing a new show, a whole load of lies, but I didn't know that's the way my condition was manifesting itself, that's the way it was operating. It had control of me.

Three months down the road I'd say to my self I'm grand now, perfect, everything's fine, everyone's happy I'll go and have a small sherry – cancel all police leave. And all I went out to do was have a small sherry but I didn't know I was going into another serious depression and a serious another attempt at, you know, reneging on my life. I didn't know that what I was going into was unknown territory, that was going to result in prison, lock up, suicide attempts, horror of horror, and I was more or less like that from the age of 20 up to four years ago.

Four years ago on the 10th June they said to me in Talbot Grove in Co. Kerry, get out, you're ready to go on and live your life. Four years ago this day I came out of a treatment centre. That treatment centre dealt with every condition you can possibly imagine. They told me it was based on a willingness to change and they worked with me, they helped me source a huge amount of what was ailing me and on the 10th June, 2000 they said go ahead and I had to follow on with a two year after care programme and a continuous maintenance of what I do. I don't take medication because I'd get too fond of it if I took it, I'd fall in love with it and I wouldn't trust myself on it because I have that condition. What I do for medication is that I do the spiritual programme on a daily basis which takes care of my needs, it takes care of my fury and it helps me if I'm wrong to admit it on a daily basis.

During that four years instead of saying I was sorry to the people, I had to go back and say to them I apologise, I take responsibility for the harm I caused, I had to go back to my son, I had to go back to my various partners and I had to apologise and I had to admit that I was wrong. In order to do this I needed a huge amount of support and help which I got from people who had done the same journey. The reason I had to do it was to ensure I wouldn't do it again. I had to clean house I had to go through every single aspect of it and the terror of that situation was that I thought I was going to be rejected and the opposite happened. So that enabled me to move on from what was basically a spent life, there was nothing to recommend it, there simply wasn't, I had everything going for me but I had nothing. I had all the skills to write books, do plays, all the talents but I was going nowhere because I had this sabotage running amok in my life.

Today I've changed, my condition for want of a better word is arrested on a daily basis. I come from a community that is rampant with this condition, I come from a country that is also rampant with this condition. There is not two yards that I would walk where I wouldn't come across someone with issues that are potentially life threatening. There isn't many people that I don't know who have had tragedies of one kind or another that have manifested themselves in their lives and yet there seems to be this sort of, push that over there now, don't be going on about that, that's private, that's secret.

I was told earlier on that my secret would kill me – they were right. I don't often talk like this, I really don't, unless it's a really safe environment and a very confidential environment, so in lots of respects I'm getting a lot of benefit out of this and I hope other people are getting a benefit out of this situation to. It was totally important that I learn to feel safe emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. It was totally essential that I was not afraid to speak what I felt. They told me if I followed the practice I'd be able to sit with anybody and say what I felt without any fear. I ran all my life from myself, I was terrified to stay in my own life, I was much happier rioting, I was much happier in the world of destruction because it occupied me, totally occupied me left right and centre. My world was closed around me, very much around me. What I try to do on a daily basis is I try and nurture myself and I try and form some sort of intimacy because that's where my needs are met.

I was crossing a street about four months ago and I saw someone who was very dear to me and they were locked drunk. They were on the far side of the road and they were about to cross the road. My heart started pounding in my chest, what if she gets a bang of a car, what if she falls, she's a frail old woman. My first instinct was to run over and grab that person and walk them into their house and something said, nurture yourself, you are the one in danger, you're the one that's needs the help, that person over there is totally sedated. And it was quite true, I was in a heap, I was breaking out in a sweat thinking they're going to get killed, that person had made that journey for the last 80 years of her life, I wasn't even going to make it across the road when I was in crisis. It was all of those kind of things that I had to learn.

I lived a very selfish life, my disease ensured that, it didn't spare me. I didn't particularly have suicidal tendencies, they had me, it was only a matter of time before they kept manifesting themselves in attempts, they just kept manifesting themselves every few months, I am only lucky enough that I'm sitting here and the only thing that was that somebody said to me you have this condition, there is a solution and there is a solution, there's no cure, I don't have answers, I'm not an expert, I didn't study the situation but I live with it, and there is the solution and the solution to me is that I live with it, I make friends in it and I realise that it's there on the end of the bed waiting for me saying, you're late this morning, that's the way it is. I can sit there in the house for an hour thinking, will I go out for breakfast or will I make breakfast, will I make breakfast or will I go out, will I have an egg or will I have this, or toast or cereal, that can go on for an hour, an hour, and that's what happens.

When I was in group therapy a person said to me, where are you, this was in a group of 12 people. I said what do you mean where am I ? I said I'm in front of you. He said, no, no, no, where are you ? I said, I'm in front of you, what are you thinking about, I said I was thinking about Dublin. He said you've no business thinking about Dublin, you've every business being present, being in yourself, that was the whole point of the group therapy, being able to sit with yourself and share out what was bothering you.

In the community that I came from and the family that I came from, and the country that I live in and came from, you are not allowed do this, you just simply weren't allowed do this. I didn't have the opportunity for my disease to take a full hold on me because I probably got saved by being in the institutions because they slaved you into the ground and they never left you alone for too long. But I don't come from a country that believes in nurture, believes in intimacy. It believes in the total opposite because if that was the case we wouldn't really be here, nobody in any of those institutions and all the money that was spent incarcerating me, and believe me my education was extremely expensive, Letterfrack did not come cheap, neither does Mountjoy prison, they didn't come cheap, yet nobody asked me do you need any help, nobody. Nobody threw their arms around me going into Mountjoy prison and said you're going to be here for a few years and we're going to help you, nobody did that. The only people who did that were the people who had the same condition as me when I was ready who said to me, we know where you're coming from, you're grand you're in your grannies, come half way and we'll be there to meet you.

And that's all I had to do, I didn't have to go the whole hog, I only had to go half way. When I went half way I got the whole solution because that's what it was, I don't have half depression, I don't have half hearted attempts at self-harm. If I stick a pin in myself, it's as lethal as cutting my arm, it's the same thing, I don't have things in halves so I can't have a half solution, it's no good to me, I live my life on a daily basis in the solution and I continuously check myself to see did I lose any part of it. I continuously thank the higher power, I continuously relate to my friends who are in the other dimension, who left prematurely for whatever reason and I say thanks very much, because I don't know whether I'm doing the right or the wrong thing on a daily basis, I can only feel I am. My mind will tell me different, my mind will tell me all sorts of things, but my feelings will always tell me the correct way, and if I'm in constant contact with a belief outside myself, it keeps me from obsessing. Because I simply on my own devices with my own head am not to be trusted because I'd be still in the gaff in the bed thinking, ah look, I'll make an excuse, I'll ring them up and tell them I can't come down or I'd be still contemplating, will I go for breakfast.

I remember going out to go to a 12 step meeting many years ago and I said I'll go for an early morning meeting, I'll go for 8 o'clock meeting. I got to the meeting then

I said, no I'll go for a 9 o'clock. So I went to another place and I said no I'll go for a 1 o'clock and when I got to that one I said no, I'll get a 6.30 and then I said I'll get an 8pm. That night I was convinced I had loads of meetings done, I convinced myself I was a well person and I was on the ball, and I was actually insane because my insanity didn't manifest itself in Dundrum, when they say, here's a medical certificate, you are insane. My insanity was subtle, because I thought I could manage the unmanageable, I thought I was okay, coming out of the District Court having attempted suicide 24 hours beforehand, you know going into the Ormond Hotel asking for a sherry, covered in blood and my head was going, sure I can tell them I was on a film set ! That's the way it was to me, everything was normalised, the abnormal was normalised and that was the subtlety of my condition until I worked with people who helped me get in touch with my feelings.

And for the first time in my life after a period of 2 years, initially six weeks, I was in touch with my feelings. It wasn't easy, I didn't like what I felt, I didn't like it at all and I would rather have jumped into sedation by living in my head, I'll get him, I'll get her, I'll get that policeman, that's constantly what was going on in my head, you know I'll get that person. I had to centre myself all the time and at the end of the day once I centred myself I accepted myself. I'm only a feeling human being. Different thoughts can come into my head all the time at random, there's a five wheel car, a three wheel car, all the time, it's constant vying for my attention everything is, but I have to hear how I'm feeling, I have to sit down and say today, through the solution, which is basically where I ask for help, I basically asked for help, I allowed people to intervene. I see people on a daily basis and I say to them are you okay, do you want some assistance, some say no, some say yes. I believe that what I have is a life today and I have an obligation to live it. There is nobody at my bed in the morning time like Jesus Christ, or Muhammad or any of them saying, this is what you do today. I get in constant contact with the situation and I live it on a daily basis, 24 hours that's all it is, that's all I have.

I'm lucky, I'm blessed that I have a life today that is a miracle. I literally have a life that is a miracle. I like myself today, I'm not in love with myself, I just like myself, there are other things about myself that I don't like, all of those things, I have all the same phobias, but that's the way I am I'm a human being. And as I say, I have a life beyond my wildest dream on a 24 hour basis. I don't carry any resentments, I

have a life threatening condition, I pay heed to it, I give it my attention and I get on with my life. I'm very grateful that something and somebody somewhere stopped me from taking my own life because ultimately that's what this talk is about, it's about sharing a possible solution to a chronic condition that wants to take my life even as I sit here. The only difference is that I'm not aiding and abetting it, because when I used to aid and abet it, that was the drug because there was a big high in it, there was a sedative in my condition that almost sedated me and there was a high in it and I had to put that high aside. Because even when I wasn't drinking or drugging or acting the maggot, like when I crossed that road when I saw that man in the four wheel drive who wouldn't reverse for the man, there was buzz – god, you could go out in a blaze of glory here and take that fucker with you !

That's what was attracting me, the kind of surge of power and the surge of the power of destruction, split seconds, split seconds before I was, in between me and ruining that man's day was the solution, I believe that solution is the miracle of what would possibly be a higher power. I don't want to sound religious, I don't want to sound medical, I'm not an expert, all I am to some extent is just bearing witness.

The same solution applies for those who have the condition and for those who are surviving people who may have passed on as a result of their condition, for those who did the ultimate, for those whom the disease overwhelmed. It's not a person who takes their life is an ultimately selfish person – this is a selfish condition. It strips you of everything long before it takes your life it will take everything else, that's what it does, it strips all realities out the door and it reigns supreme. I was just today one of the lucky persons, very, very lucky person to be able to come in that close and touch it and express it hopefully here today to throw a bit more light on the situation.

Everybody has it in some degrees or other and everybody whether they have it or whether they don't need some solutions, and some answers and some sort of process in their lives. I hope that my sharing with you here tonight was some sort of help and some sort of solace and that some sort of progress can be made out of it. It's just another difference, it's not an alien form, it, to a large extent, is an every day situation and as I say we have to change ourselves and our society and we have to embrace the sufferers and embrace the solutions. It comes to all classes, all

creeds, it doesn't discriminate against anybody, it's everywhere. Nobody is picked out because they did such and such a thing, that's just the way it is. It just manifests itself like that and because it keeps you in isolation, because it destroys everything, because it's so anti the life force, we take it upon ourselves thinking that it's something got to do with me, when in actual fact it's got nothing to do with anybody. It's so selfish it's just got to do with itself. I've seen brave men and women struggle desperately with the condition and I've seen brave men and brave women live with the solution on a daily basis and I have seen the tragic results of when the condition can become overwhelming. It is a no fault condition and today I hope we take a step in the direction of taking some sort of ownership, some sort of responsibility in spreading the word that you can live with these conditions, you can live with them.

So, I know I've gone over the time so I want to thank you very much and I want to wish you all a safe and a happy future. Thank you very much.

Professor Malone: Thank you Gerard Mannix Flynn. What we are going to do now is to take some questions. I can't summarise nor condense, nor would I, what you've heard is what you've heard and you won't hear it anywhere else, it's Gerard Mannix Flynn's story. We will take a few questions and then I'll make some announcements at the end.

Question: Hi Mannix, I would like to know if you have any tips when the physical condition puts you into that fear situation, how do you come out of them quicker ?

Mannix Flynn: What I usually do is I usually focus very quickly, I go from my head into my feelings and I immediately think of the consequences of where I'm heading and that usually breaks it. It usually gives me a gap before the whole thing takes over me. So I always concede to it, I never fight it, I never would go head to head with it. I immediately admit defeat. It's too big for me, I was told very early on admit defeat on this business, once I stepped into the ring with it, it had won, so once I engaged with it at any level, I immediately admit defeat and then I was able to think, okay fine. If it was here, I'd drop down there, I'd never engage it. I used to be able to sit with it then but when I got an attack of it, I knew it was armed up so I had to stand still and let it run by them and not react to it.

It was just a question of practicing that and being able to sit on my own and allow myself be and then I was quite protected. So like in any of the instances I described, it flew by me and it did manifest itself, everything manifests itself, the anger was gone, he was out the door of the car, the whole thing went on, but it didn't happen, I didn't let it manifest.

Professor Malone: Mannix, by admitting defeat does that mean it didn't overwhelm you ?

Mannix Flynn: Well yeah, what I didn't do was, when it came in to engage me and it went off on a tangent with the guy in the car or any given place, the two forces would have been on to this person but what it really wanted to do was to engage me anyway so by admitting defeat I was able to get across the road and see what it was, I was able to think the consequences out. It was always the strongest part, my disease is stronger than me and the only thing I have in relation to it was the solution, the solution was I am powerless over it, admit defeat, don't engage because what happened to me was that it became so seductive, the idea of pulling your man out of the car, was very seductive because that was the whole idea of it and it's just another way of self-harming, it's just another way of getting back into the whole business because that would've resulted in a charge sheet, resulted in a sacking, and the whole thing was on its way. So it kept manifesting itself, so to admit defeat was not to engage it.

Professor Malone: Sort of out foxing it in a way then because a lot of people will say, I'm a fighter, I'll keep fighting it, but you're saying that that absorbs you and takes all your time and therefore you can't focus beyond that.

Mannix Flynn: Well it's like that situation, you are fighting it but you're fighting it in a different fashion, you're not engaging it, once you engage the thing its going to overwhelm you, you know, I may as well run down to Pearse Street Garda Station, tear off my shirt and call them a bunch of nancy boys and think I'm going to come out unharmed. They'd think I was a nut case. So I had to learn it was far more powerful a condition and far more powerful and it was ultimately going to destroy me and what it needed was for me to get in play with it, and it became brilliant when

I played with it. I could walk down Grafton Street with no shirt on and all that carry on and go high and low. So I don't live my life like that anymore, I don't smoke, you know, I'm a non-smoker, I'm not off the cigarettes, I don't smoke – so I live the programme because my condition will ensure that it comes at me walking in St. Stephens Green, you know, your man's not picking up those leaves fast enough, why are they putting the Luas down today? So I have to recognise those things, there's me and there's my condition and my condition wants to overwhelm me all the time and I have to work as a kind of referee, and the referee is almost like the spirit, so that's what I do, I hear it coming, so I have to be in tune with it.

Its not a question of out smarting it because I'll never be able to outsmart it, I just practice the solution so as it's automatic. I don't think about the process, the process is me, I practice it every day. I get up in the morning and I say help me get through this day, help me to be decent today, help me not to be overwhelmed by any situation before me, help me do that. I sit down sometimes and I write 20 pages and then I try and read them back to myself and I can't read my own handwriting because I'm furious and I want to tear them up, and I have to kind of negotiate I've got to learn to negotiate between me and my conditions so I have a negotiation process and that's basically where it is, I negotiate, and once I negotiate I'm negotiating for the good side of me against the situation and through all the practices I'm able to let the man with the Zimmer frame get across the road safe, let the man in the four wheel drive get on his way and I survive, it's about my survival, I'm indifferent to the two other people and my disease is indifferent to everybody so it's just that process of negotiation which is really quick because all the time I have to remember that I put myself in the situation if I engage it, if I step into the ring I'm engaging it and they'll say to me fair enough you have the condition of depression but you engaged it, and at the end of the day I might say to the Judge, Your Honour, I'm a depressive, I've got this condition and he'll say, fair enough, well I'm going to convict you, it's still a criminal act, I'm a person who is well but I still have my condition, I'm still prone to that situation.

Professor Malone: A lot of tips in that answer, we have another question here.

Question: This situation, the four wheel drive, has it become any easier for you to do it now than if that situation had happened four years ago. Has it become easier

for you to do this technique, the longer you go on does it become easier or is it difficult every day when that kind of situation would happen ?

Mannix Flynn: It becomes habit so while my condition does not get satisfaction and that's frustrating, because I'm in constant grieving that I had to let go of my condition, I had to let go of your man so I have to negotiate that situation, so it becomes less and less of a situation. You know I really to a large extent am happiest in the middle of my condition because then I don't have any responsibility, show me Iraq and I'm in the middle of it, I like the crisis and the confrontation, so I've learned how to negotiate myself go through the process and recognise them for what they are, they don't crop up very often but they're just where I live my life. Beforehand I was oblivious to all that, it was just part and parcel of it, so while they can be a bit discomfoting because I certainly would've liked to get the better of your man on just a civil issue but I have to remember that I was going to the highest court in the land and all your man had done was very little really, but the consequences in terms of my disease were huge and because I have that condition the first person it impacts on is me, so it's impacting on me rapidly, you know, the man in the car is listening to Larry Gogan, the man with the Zimmer frame is trying to get across the road to his pint, I'm the one in the condition, and I've got to remember that, I'm the one the ambulance needs to be called for, and then when you get across the road, the amount of relief you get from the solution working is fantastic.

It's much easier to cope, as long as I get the progress on a daily basis because when I sit down in the evening I say right, I've got to give myself some credit because if I don't give myself some credit I won't know I've made progress, I have to do those things. Because I'm prone to getting angry, getting furious so I have to nurture myself so it's a whole continuous 24 hours a day because I inhabit this life, I'm responsible for this life in all it's conditions and situations so, the initial early part of the process of healing, of help, of nurture was very difficult, putting it into practice is always a little scary. It's much easier to scream at your man in the car and call him all the names, because it would be a huge release, because he would've got what was going on last week in my life and the week before, you know the fact that the windows in the gaff aren't clean, the milk was off, and I'd give him the whole lot it and I go dumping, fly tipping, there's a person dumping rubbish on the ground and I

go after them, the police woman doing her job with the pins, so it does become easier.

Mainly when I lie down in my bed, when I'm back in the safe place, I give my thanks for the day and what happened in the day and I thank myself and I do that whole business, so my life primarily is one of a spiritual life, I'm not saying I'm a priest, I'm not anything to do with the church, I just live it on that situation because I'm a wounded individual, I've been generationally wounded, I carry all of this over a long period of time so I need a tremendous amount of healing to be able to be here in the room tonight. I have to have that. And also a lot of people know my life, a lot of people close in my life saw horror happening, so they have to see me well on a daily basis, by me getting well, they get well. My primary daily basis is not necessarily about doing someone else's work as doing the work. And also there are other areas of my life where I have to be angry, if I'm negotiating up the street and there are four bowsies coming towards me that may be threatening, I have to carry my anger right out in front, I don't have to go violent, but I have to have all of things because I don't dump anything so everything that I needed is in it's healthy form, so I need my shame, I need my guilt, I need my anger, I need all those things. I'm opening and closing the shop on a daily basis, I need to stock take, check out the whole situation, how I'm feeling is grand, before I was checking out how the city was feeling, I was responsible for O'Connell Street, Grafton Street, Co. Kerry, the North, now I'm not, I'm only responsible for my own well being.

Question: Thank for your chat, you're obviously a very self-disciplined man now and I'd just like to ask you how much does the non-smoking and non-drinking contribute to your control of the present ?

Mannix Flynn: They're situations that I just don't do. I don't drink anymore because there isn't enough alcohol being made at the moment, as I say alongside my conditions I am 100% card carrying member alcoholic, so I can't drink, I have a total allergy to it. Not drinking and working my life the way it is, has enhanced me massively, it's opened up a total area that I didn't know existed at all. The not smoking business stops all my energy going into neurosis, because I was puffing away like nobody's business, I'm healthier, much more energetic, I've much more life in me and I don't rely on 20 smokes, because that's what was happening, was that

all the situation was becoming negative and because I've embraced this way of life I didn't need those things and they were only going to hold me back, so I'd say if I smoked tomorrow morning I would become constitutionally dubious, I'd need an amendment and if I took a gargle I'd be constitutionally bankrupt, I'd be finished and they'd be queuing up for the stripes down in Pearse Street but they are part of the disciplines. They're also part of the situation where of course there are times, when you feel like a cigarette or a drink but you have to remember the consequences.

I'm 47 years of age, I can't just have desserts in the Restaurants, I can't, I have to watch everything and I live my life totally this way because I lived my totally the other way, I thought, but I didn't, it had me totally. I woke up in the morning wherever I was and my primary was to have a drink and anything could happen after that. So I have to and I want to so I made a decision to live my life this way, I can do everything, it allowed the huge amount of things to happen in my life that hitherto couldn't happen because the gates were closed. I lived my life kind of homicide/suicide fashion, I'm an appointed member of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, a life beyond my wildest dreams, you know those kind of things happen and they only happen by turning my life over so the drinking and the smoking were toxins that had to be left out of my life.

Question: I'd like to thank you for your story, it was very interesting and shows great self-awareness but another comment I'd like to make, would you not consider looking at other people you know when somebody would annoy you, for example the man in the four wheel drive, that maybe he'd forgotten to wish his wife happy birthday before he went out that morning and he was worried about the consequences afterwards or something. I was just wondering about the inner strength and the inner focus, all that therapy could have been wasted, but would you feel there was an inner strength that would have helped ?

Mannix Flynn: Well, I think the first thing that helped me was that I learned to admit defeat , I learned to not have any resistance to the situation and I allowed individuals who had travelled the road that I wanted to travel, fill me up with the strength that I needed and it was always on a 24 hour basis because as I say there was so many insurmountable hurdles. There was the addiction to alcohol, the addiction to cigarettes, the addiction to self-harm, all total close down situations,

doors that had to be opened. So the strength that I have today that enables me to be here is a strength that I draw from a power greater than myself, that's the situation. If I'm left to my own will - that's another monster. My will is okay in doses but I have to negotiate and share with my higher power with the greater purpose because as I say my disease and my condition manifests itself right across the board, it can show itself in my eating habits, my sleeping habits, my clothing habits, it can manifest itself everywhere and I have to be present to meet it. As I said my strengths aren't strong enough but the programme and the discipline that comes through that spiritual programme is the referee.

Prof. Malone: It's a fantastic privilege to hear someone's story and we've been privileged this evening to hear Mannix Flynn's story, his personal experience and I believe it's the start of a great wave of change when you have people that are willing to give the kind of presentation that Mannix did and it was his story, personal and unique and he was willing to share it and there is no doubt about it, those of you who know some of his work will be aware of the beacon and really beacon is the word for a certain lost tribe in Ireland and long may he continue in this pioneering role in that regard.

So I would like to officially on behalf of the 3T's like to thank Mannix for being here this evening, it's been a personal honour and privilege to meet him and to introduce you to him and I would like to give him a round of applause.

Just a couple of thank you notes. You may recall the last time we were here we were looking for volunteers to run the min-marathon, we were very grateful for those of you who took the time and effort to fill out the forms, get the sponsorship and then actually run the mini-marathon. We are asking that anything you have raised would be sent to our office at 9 Fitzwilliam Square if you wouldn't mind and we are very grateful for every penny because that's really how we're going to make the change in the longer run.

I have to thank the staff, Trevor and Johnny Moran, manager of the Holiday Inn Dublin City Centre who continue to make us welcome and make this series a very unique event in Dublin's calendar. I'm delighted to say we are already working busily behind the scenes for our autumn series and all of you who have given any

kind of contact number or email address we will be notifying you as soon as we put that programme together.

We are also in the final stages of developing our 2 day conference between the 12 and 14 November which is called, Suicide the Irish Dimension and we have National and International speakers from different walks of Irish society, professional, health care, education and we really hope it's going to build our portfolio and our visibility with regard to lobbying for serious change not just a band aid solution. I saw today in the newspaper that 1 out of 5 people who call what is really a research crisis line in Cork, one out of 5 people get through, so really we are just looking at the tip of the iceberg, we're not going to settle for band aid solutions we need radical and sustained solutions if we are really serious about reducing the suicide rates in Ireland. I'm not sure how long we can continue to support almost 500 suicides a year in this country and stand idly by, 250 of those who are under the age of 30, so I don't think we can sustain that. So the conference in November will be a shop window, if you like, for all of the charities who were at the coal face, we are also inviting the statutory agencies of the government as well so it's not going to be an us and them bashing session, we're more likely to do it if we do it together. So please keep an eye for that. It will be open to members of the community as well as members of health, etc. who wish to attend.

That's it, safe home and we look forward to seeing you in September.