Dear Family and Friends,

It was as if I had brain worms constantly moving around in my head, changing my mood and making me afraid of something all the time.

I'm screwed!

Where's the off-switch?
Seventeen million adults had a major depressive episode last year. And the numbers for children are staggering. The personal, social, and economic costs of anxiety and depression are almost impossible to quantify. But they are certainly real.
It’s one thing to think the unthinkable. It’s something very different to say it.

Seventeen million adults had a major depressive episode last year and I was one of them.
If you're going to write about a life lived with anxiety and depression, you have to take a hard look at the past. But how do you do that without judging yourself, others, or the social circumstances not of your own making?
There's nothing to be gained from blame.

But for me, there was no moving forward without an honest look at the varied and complicated events that brought me to this confession.
Sharing what it's like to live with anxiety and depression is a lot like undressing in front of strangers.

FTO Awkward.
But how to confess?
How to tell this story?

I tried doing it in my head like I did as a boy in church. Bless me Father for I have sinned... But the truth is, hiding it was actually one of the ways I survived.
Maybe I should write a letter...

I sat for days in front of a blank page. I couldn't remember the last time I wrote a letter.

Dear Family and Friends,
When anxious and depressed, which was most of the time, I would laugh a lot. My laughter was often fake as it was honest. I knew that laughing and smiling were key to hiding the truth.
Don’t misunderstand, it’s not that I didn’t ever feel happy, or experience joy. It’s that I figured out how to use a smile or a laugh to mask feeling anxious or depressed.
The fact is, I can be surrounded by a thousand people and feel completely alone.
I always felt like the whole world was going one way, while I went another.
Over time I developed an ability to pretend everything was okay. I mastered "fake it 'til you make it!"

Often, once I was present, I could find a way to enjoy myself for a time.

But the cycle of dreading having to be somewhere, followed by regret, anger, or guilt was exhausting. I had to keep moving.
Pretending easily became lying, which became telling people what I thought they wanted to hear. I could pretend my way through almost any situation.

By lying to myself, convincing myself that I was the problem.
Just push it all away and keep moving.

Fight to feel
Fight not to feel
Black feelings

For external validation deny real feelings or any meaningful connection to my body.

Above the line I live in fight flight mode, brain alert. More push feelings away.

Below the line I feel war with too much noise too many words awareness consciousness threshold.
Inside I was slowly dying.
As I got older, I grew angrier. And as I grew angrier, I grew more desperate to keep what I was feeling inside.

Sometimes, my brain was on fire and I would never be able to hold back my rage. It became increasingly difficult to keep all this hidden.
I've barely reached the heart of the matter in this brief letter. But it's a start.

What I know for certain, is that it's no longer possible for me to pretend. I don't have a life with anxiety and depression and you understand. I tell you openly about it. About my well-being, my family, the truth, especially to you and friends.

Love,
Bill