



#depressionhurts

My Story—Helen

I'm Helen, I'm in my 20's and work in Social Care, this is my story:

I see depression as a well - one I have sunk to the bottom of many times throughout my adult life.

The little things are the hardest. Waking up in the morning, making yourself get out of bed, brushing your teeth. These things, for me, become mountains when I'm at the bottom of the well. A phone call to the bank, or a trip to the post office? Forget it. I couldn't even begin to face those things.

I am a mid twenties woman. I have a good support network, a good social life, and a good career. I look really successful to you.

You think I am upbeat, happy, fun to be around... but at times, lazy.

That laziness you see is me trying to escape my thoughts. It's my body shutting down and saying, "You know what? This is too much. Go to bed". I'm not walking around on the verge of tears every day but I always feel a little bit sad.

A recent trip with friends confirmed to me that my well had run dry again. I was sitting there, surrounded by fun, loving people and I was laughing but I felt on the verge of tears. I was forcing a smile. My stomach felt sick. My head started to pound. I started to yawn. I could see myself sinking to the bottom of the well.

This is where depression gets frustrating for me. I am intelligent. I know that it is an illness, yet here I was berating myself for being so negative, when I was surrounded by such positivity.

"Do you know how lucky you are?" I ask myself that question frequently. And the answer of course, is yes, I do know but when it hits, it hits. Common sense goes out the window.

That's the thing about depression. It makes you feel like you're going insane at times. The negative thoughts, the no sleeping at night and then sleeping all day, the forgetfulness. Sometimes I forget the simplest things. I get what I call a 'mushy brain' in the middle of a bout.



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I hate it but it also signifies the beginning of the end for me. I become disorientated, I get distracted driving, I forget pin numbers... It's a weird feeling. It's almost like my brain has decided that in order to cope it will shut itself down.

I can't imagine how frustrating it is for you! To watch me – a young, successful person, surrounded by good relationships and opportunities, to seem so negative and lazy, but believe me, for every frustrating feeling you have towards me, I feel it too. I beat myself up about this every day. So this is my open letter to each and every person who has a loved one with this illness.

Please accept that like all illnesses there are variations in symptoms and severity. Just because one person you know displays depression by crying, doesn't mean that I am not using sleep as an escape. Just because one person you know made an attempt on their life, doesn't mean that I am not at times that low too. I have been. I guess that I will be again someday.

The reason I have never fully reached that point where I have actively tried to harm myself is that I have one person who gets it. Just one, out of my scores of family and friends – but that's enough.

One person who I can ring day or night and tell them how bad I am feeling, and regardless of how irrational it may sound - they listen. They don't tell me to snap out of it. They don't tell me to count myself lucky. They don't make me feel bad for feeling bad. They just listen.

When I am really bad, they have been known to leave their house and come to me. They don't know it, but they have pulled me back from the brink several times, by just answering their phone. I owe them my sanity, and at times my life. There is no doubt about it.

Everyone else in my life supports me for a time... That first week or two, then they move on, or expect me to "Snap out of it". I know that people have their limits but please have patience with a loved one with depression. No one wants to feel like this. This is not something you can "snap" yourself out of. Believe me, I've tried.

We all have busy lives, I myself have been guilty of lending a hand to people for a time and then getting distracted by my own life, but don't be too busy to



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We all have busy lives, I myself have been guilty of lending a hand to people for a time and then getting distracted by my own life but don't be too busy to help someone, no matter how trivial it may seem. Every cry for help, no matter how big or small is still a cry for help.

Answering it doesn't have to be dramatic or time consuming.

Just be a listening ear, someone who will reassure that things will get better, and that until they do you won't leave their side, no matter how long it takes. Because, for me personally, that's my biggest fear - that this illness will take my relationships. Let me know you're there, have patience with me, and please wait for me.

And no matter how long this illness takes hold for, please never be too busy with your own life to help someone. We can't allow another person slip through the net. We are all far too precious. x