

Allow me to let you into a world, a world that you may not understand, but is so very real to so many.

To preface this column, let me say that I do not feel this way right now, however – I have felt this way many times throughout my life. This has been my process and not necessarily the process of others – yet, I have found many common denominators with those that have experienced depression and suicidal ideology.

To all outward appearances, life seems to be fine, maybe even great. There is not any external reason to feel the least bit sad but paranoia does start to creep in. Little comments are misinterpreted and actions of others are too closely analyzed in the mind. In the beginning there is the ability to logically and reasonably assess the thoughts and counteract them with optimism and realism. As the days go on words and actions of the past start to flood in at unexpected times with somewhat a diligent attack on all that is real.

There seems to be a spark of creativity that finds its way into the mind of a depressed state. Thoughts become very deep and very philosophical. Gradually, every aspect of life; yours and others, is analyzed and broken down into a myriad of reason and purpose. Your life starts to pale in comparison to everyone you know and love. Every word or action from everyone around you translates into emotion that feeds this reason of thought.

Eventually you are consumed with all that has been, all that is and all that might be. All of which are negative and many times are realistic, however you are not combating any of these negative emotions or feelings with all that is positive in your life... those feelings and emotions are somehow gone and you are left with all that is negative.

Getting out of bed becomes as difficult as climbing Mount Everest, but in the beginning you manage and you manage to matriculate with all that is normal – yet everything around you seems like bodies of energy circling you. You don't hear full sentences or conversation, you simply hear noise. Colors fade to what appears to be an old black and white film – darkness in the backdrop.

Depression, which is chemical and medical – starts in the mind and in emotion – however, after time it becomes physical. The emotional pain starts to manifest into physical pain. One can get sick to their stomach at a drop of hat in response to a flash of overpowering negative thought.

One that has been diagnosed with depression or an illness that involves depression knows that there is help. One that has sought this help in the past and did overcome, yet to only be experiencing it all again – is exhausted, disappointed and hit with the reality that even when you do everything right – depression has the ability to mutate itself into your life once again... you find it hard to fight any longer.

Then comes the numbness. You find peace in the idea of death. The cycle can be broken – you don't have to go through this any longer and those that care about you don't have to experience it and then of course those who don't care (which at that point is most) will be happy, even celebrate the fact you exist no longer.

You begin a journey to express what you want to leave behind. Enough information to last a life time – but in as few words and gestures and actions as possible. Finding lyrics in music that can

best capture your life as efficiently and as effectively as possible. Writing poetry that can express an emotion without the energy that it takes to write long letters and explain the unexplainable, after all you have tried to explain it all before.

You have become enveloped by the darkness and the illness. A million dollars could drop in your lap and you would simply write a check to Josh Groban to sing at your funeral. A cure for Bipolar could be discovered and you would hand over a list of people to cure, you don't include yourself.

People start to notice... Words like you, "quit feeling sorry for yourself" fly at you like cyanide laced arrows. You laugh inside, thinking, "Keep shooting these arrows – I deserve every one of them." No one can possibly hurt you more than the disease itself is hurting you. You physically feel as though you are dying and may not even have to take your own life, because you will die of the pain alone.

The decision has been made; you are going to leave this earth. As if planning for a vacation around the world, you get a sense of exhilaration – it is going to be over soon – you can escape this disease and all that you feel hate you so very much. You can even make a lot of people happy in the process and as far as those that do love you (remember at this point you have been convinced that there are few) – they will be better off without you and like all other deaths – they will "get over it", "go on with life", and "be busy with their lives" just as you see everyone around you "consumed with their own life not realizing that you are dying.

Sounds almost impossible to get out of, doesn't it? Well, it isn't. It is harder than hell, yes – but not impossible. It is important to understand that a family member or loved one cannot administer Chemo-therapy to a loved one dealing with cancer and a family member or loved one cannot administer therapy or the needed help to a suicidal mind.

I can say directly and firmly to those that do love their loved one that has depression, this is not your fault any more than it is the person's fault. You simply need to act on what you see with the severity of life and death. For those who treat it lightly... well, that is a burden I simply would not want to bear.

Mental Illness IS life or death. For those that treat those with mental illness with statements such as, "he can't get his shit together" or "He is just spoiled" or "It is all just an excuse" or "He's just a liar" – I could write a book on just what I have heard about myself! – To those that treat mental illness that way... Keep those words, because it will be only comfort and excuse you have after death does occur. To the rest of us – we know the severity of mental illness, we know it is treatable, we know that those of us that are not mental health or medical professionals cannot do it alone and we will find every avenue possible to get our loved one's the help they so desperately need and we will live with a peace of mind – knowing, we did just that, with compassion. Sometimes the illness wins – just as any illness, sometimes wins. However – we will give one hell of a fight!

Be KIND to one another – we do not know what another is going through. Mental Illness or not.