

Edition: U.S.

THE BLOG



Elise Jamison

16-year-old from Canfield, Ohio

This Is What Depression *Really* Feels Like

As teenagers, we love to exaggerate. Every good day is the best day ever. Every bad day was the worst thing that has ever happened to anyone, anywhere, ever. That girl in my third period totally cussed me out for like no reason at all. (Okay, she told me to stop talking so much, then rolled her eyes. hehe...)

You guys get the point I'm sure. But as we become more educated as to what mental illnesses are and who they impact, it seems like every teen with Twitter has a PhD in psych. The second we have too much caffeine before school and can't focus in calc, we totes have ADHD. Oh, your friend doesn't like when her room is messy? Oh my God, complete obsessive compulsive freak. God forbid we have a day where everything goes wrong. Clearly we are clinically depressed. These exaggerations may seem harmless but they are desensitizing us to, and sometimes even inadvertently making fun of, actual mental illnesses. You may think you are just tweeting something in a moment of angst (we all have them), but you could be hurting someone in the process. We need to get some real info on this subject, and stop diagnosing ourselves and each other at the drop of a hat.

So let's learn a little bit.

I am going to talk about a disorder I have a lot of experience with. I have seen so many of my peers tweet about how depressed they are and they're lives are so awful blah blah blah. Yes. We all have bad days. I get it. But [depression is defined as severe despondency and dejection](#), felt over a period of time and accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy. There is a humongous difference between temporary sadness and dissatisfaction with your life, and the sinking desperation that is depression. It sucks when you don't fit in and you are lonely, but that isn't depression. Depression is the dark emptiness you feel that makes you believe you can contribute nothing to anyone or anything. You feel like your life means nothing to anyone.

My inspiration for this article was frustration. I was diagnosed at age 14 with depression, and I am so frustrated with all of the people around me who cannot differentiate between angst, PMS and mental illness. I have worked so hard in the last couple years to overcome this illness and it is still a daily battle. It took me years to even be able to acknowledge that I mattered and realize that people cared about me. There is nothing more frustrating than someone who says they are clinically depressed because they are feeling sad that day. It devalues the struggle I and so many others have endured. And to all of the incredibly ignorant people out there who think just because someone has a nice family, cushy home and pretty belongings does not mean they can't be depressed -- they lack the chemical serotonin in their brain. It has nothing to do with the fact that they wear Ferragamos or Target flip-flops.

Essentially, my point is that we need to realize the severity of this and many other mental disorders. They really do hurt people, so I implore you to stop treating them so casually. Furthermore, if you recognize yourself in this article, seek help. Visit the crisistextline.org for compassionate help via text if you are contemplating suicide, or contact the suicide hotline at 1-800-273-8255. Your school guidance counselor is also there for a reason. If bad days turn into weeks, which turn into months, tell someone. But don't freak out over one daily mishap.

COMMENTS TO BLOG POSTING TITLED, **'This Is What Depression Really Feels Like'**

28 people are discussing this article with 33 comments:

Howard S. (hgoodguy) A very good example why parents should LISTEN to their children.

1 JAN 10:26 PM

Jamie J. (alajamie)

You are correct Howard--and as her parent we did LISTEN and we are so proud of her!

2 JAN 10:36 PM

Sarah R. (odaat52)

If I had known what you know at your age, I might not be an older gray-haired lady with the history of recurrent depression I have, or at least, wouldn't have spent so much time hating myself for my inadequacy and inability to overcome, and for being a disappointment to my family. Whether it's trivializing the problem (just teenaged angst) or sweeping it under the rug (there's no mental illness in MY family) or just plain ignorance, the failure to get help for someone of any age who is suffering from clinical depression, or putting that person down for their illness, is really unfortunate and all too often has tragic consequences. It is true that many people suffer drastic difficulties in life and never have depression -- that's because the illness is not always directly tied to life circumstances. Genetics and early life experiences play a huge part, and it's very difficult if not impossible to tease out causes. If you need help, speak up. Bottom line. And don't shut up until you get it.

1 JAN 11:23 PM

Jane U. (Janeu)

SUPER USER·184 Fans·Depression is anger without enthusiasm

Thank you, Sarah. I couldn't have articulated this any better. F&F

4 JAN 8:06 AM

Ruth Wiserone (Muzzle_Me)

SUPER USER·1,304 Fans·I'm one failure closer to winning in life.

So, powerful. Thank you for sharing this. This really just explained it so well:

"Depression is the dark emptiness you feel that makes you believe you can contribute nothing to anyone or anything. You feel like your life means nothing to anyone".

1 JAN 9:58 PM

Kevin V. (Vandenbroek)

Elise: It gets better. As someone who has experienced depression during a few periods of my life, I have finally reached a modicum of happiness. Actually, let me reword that -- I have finally found an understanding of my limits which has led to a sweet degree of satisfaction. Depression "feels like" desperation. But give matters your best shot. The attempts gift you with personal "bragging rights." Satisfaction is the takeaway.

Really, with a little work, it WILL get better. Feel good, my new friend. Easy to say. Hard to do.

But -- and here's my hope -- it will take you much less time to get to that point where you find satisfaction with yourself by reaching out. My saving grace was stepping from my shoes, into the pairs of other people. Might work for you, Elise. There's a whole, wide, wanting community out there. They are waiting for you. Get involved in whatever way you choose.

As I have learned, my "satisfaction" has been ratcheted-up by reaching-out and touching those around me. A final note: Know when to say no. Honesty with your limitations will be a source of pride and not a failing on your part.

And that might make you a tad happier.

Thank you for your post, Elise!

1 JAN 10:29 PM

Shay S. (humaneisfact)

SUPER USER·1,771 Fans·socialist christian democrat

nicely said, Kevin

2 JAN 2:47 AM

lheartmichaelvartan

Thank you for this. It is a daily struggle for so many even with medication and therapy. It is always with you but you learn your limits like you stated. Good luck. And yes, it is such hard work, the hardest thing ever to work on it and get help, but it is totally worth it.

1 JAN 11:07 PM

Sarah M. (Taotatum)

Amazingly well written, and a very mature and accurate outlook on this. I wish you all the best in your future, learning tools to help yourself cope and maybe helping educate others as you do so!

2 JAN 11:34 PM

Lacynda Mathes (Lacynda_Mathes)

Well said.

2 JAN 1:17 PM

Sue Meek (sueken70)

Thank you! My daughter went through a depression starting in her senior year of high school and lasting almost 2 years. She is one of the lucky ones who hasn't had a recurrence, but it was so hard to explain to people how

debilitating and all-consuming depression is, and not to get outraged at people who would say "she just needs to get over it". Please keep up your blog, and I pray that you will "conquer the beast". God bless you!

3 JAN 1:42 AM

Craig Walters (Craig57702)

Insightful, thank you for your words. Keep up the good fight!

2 JAN 1:42 AM

Fed Farmer (theFederal_Farmer)

Good article. Take care and good luck.

2 JAN 2:28 AM