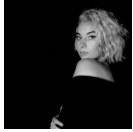


The Stigma of Depression



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The stigma of depression is alive.

When we have depression, we are “lesser people.” We are incapable of living a “normal” life, holding down a job, or keeping a relationship. We are the ones that “normal” people don’t know how to deal with. They keep away, because we are contagious. They don’t want to contract the “crazy.”



At least, this is what many people think. None of it is true, of course. This is the stigma that follows us around daily when we suffer from depression — like a mosquito we keep swatting away that keeps coming back to bite us.

On whom can we place the blame for the creation and longevity of the stigma? Our friends and family who don’t fully [understand depression](#)? The media? Society as a whole?

Probably all of them — they work together to form an unfriendly soup of stigma. Media portrayals of depression are not always so accurate, for example. Take the [massive Internet backlash](#) surrounding the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why* — which included some unfortunate stereotypes about depression and suicide. Another thing to consider is that depression presents so differently in different kinds of people, so it’s almost impossible to depict every type.

It’s 2017. Why is there still such a stigma surrounding mental illness? Even depression, which is scarily common, is seriously misunderstood and stigmatized. [According to the ADAA](#), 16.1 million adults in the US are depressed. That’s 6.7% of all the adults here, making it pretty prevalent compared to other mental illnesses and physical diseases.

The stigma results in so many misconceptions. The stigma can also be dangerous for the person who's suffering from the condition. Why? The negative stigma can make someone embarrassed to confess the way they're feeling or reach out to get help for fear of being shamed and being labeled [pejoratively](#) as something like a "basket case." Also, we can stigmatize ourselves, feeling shame simply for being who we are because of the way that society makes us feel.

The reality is that depression is not one size fits all. It can be completely obvious that a person is depressed, or the case may be that you'd never in a million years guess that the person was depressed. Many people find it difficult to wrap their heads around the concept of high functioning depression.

If you're feeling depressed, remember that:

- You can be beautiful and depressed.
- You can be successful and depressed.
- You can be young and depressed.
- You can have *everything* going for you and still be depressed.

Depression is a disease and a disability. It's not a choice, and we can't necessarily control it. Other chronic diseases like heart disease or arthritis aren't looked down upon or stigmatized, so why is depression any different? Why do people condemn us for being depressed? Depressed people have enough on our plates already!

So, if you suffer from depression, I have a challenge for you. Make a conscious effort to help break the stigma. You can start by sharing this article! Post stories on Facebook or retweet things on Twitter that are informative so your friends and followers become more familiar with mental illness and get the facts.

If you [don't suffer from depression](#) (lucky you) I have a challenge for you, as well. Be an ally! Educate yourself about depression, the symptoms, the risks, and the statistics. Ask your friends/family members who are sufferers what you can do to help them personally, and how to help on an even larger scale.

If we band together and do just a little bit of fighting each day, we can slowly but surely rid society of this stigma. Imagine a world where having depression is viewed just for what it is? A health condition like any other. Let's make it happen.

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Call the 24-hr National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1.800.273.8255.

Your call will be routed to the crisis center near you. If your issue is an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.