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DESIGNED AND PRODUCED IN EDMONTON BY:



PUBLISHED BY:
SOS Communications
Suite 200, 10355 Jasper Ave.
Edmonton, AB T5J 1Y6
www.sossafetymagazine.com

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Let's Talk About 'Depression' -
Is It What I Think It Is?



OOOH YESSS!!!
FINALLY WE ARE
INVITED TO A HOUSE
PARTY!! THERE'LL BE A
DJ TOO! GET READY TO
TEAR UP THE DANCE
FLOOR WITH ME,
SARAH!



I DON'T KNOW IF I
WANT TO GO...SOUNDS
STRESSFUL. THERE'LL BE SO MANY
PEOPLE THERE...I DON'T THINK
HOUSE PARTIES ARE MY THING.
HOW ABOUT WE BAIL AND
WATCH MOVIES AT MY
PLACE INSTEAD?

WHOA NOW!
HOW DO YOU
KNOW HOUSE
PARTIES AREN'T
YOUR THING IF
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN
TO ONE, HMM? DON'T
WORRY, IF WE GO
TOGETHER I
PROMISE WE'LL
HAVE FUN!



I
DON'T
KNOWWW
...



PLEEEEEASE! YOU CAN'T DENY
THESE MOVES!!

OKAY
OKAY
I'LL GO!
NOW
STOP
IT!

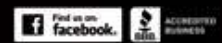


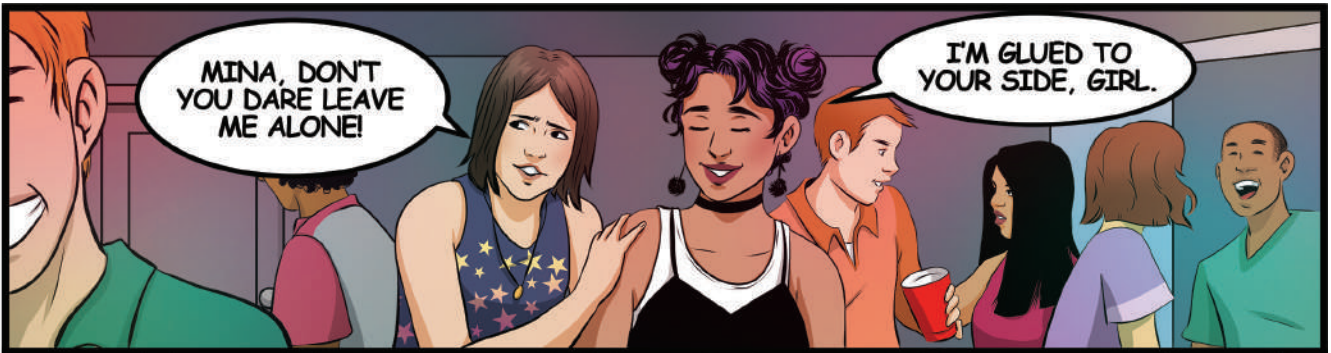
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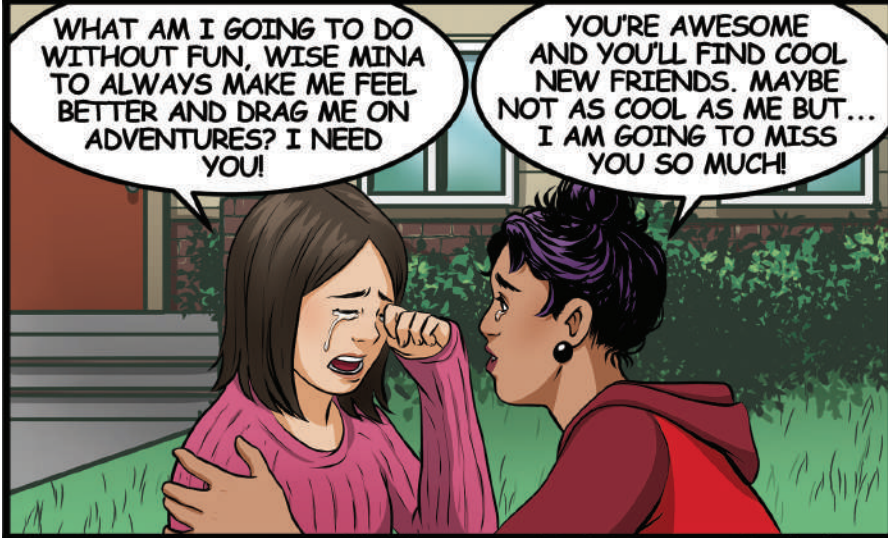
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SEVERAL MONTHS LATER...

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING.

I KNOW. I HATE THAT WE'RE MOVING SO FAR AWAY!



WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITHOUT FUN, WISE MINA TO ALWAYS MAKE ME FEEL BETTER AND DRAG ME ON ADVENTURES? I NEED YOU!

YOU'RE AWESOME AND YOU'LL FIND COOL NEW FRIENDS. MAYBE NOT AS COOL AS ME BUT... I AM GOING TO MISS YOU SO MUCH!



A FEW MONTHS LATER...

SARAH, EVERY TIME I SEE YOU YOU'RE SITTING AROUND WASTING TIME. DON'T YOU HAVE HOME-WORK?

I DON'T FEEL GOOD. I MISS MINA SO MUCH! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITHOUT HER!

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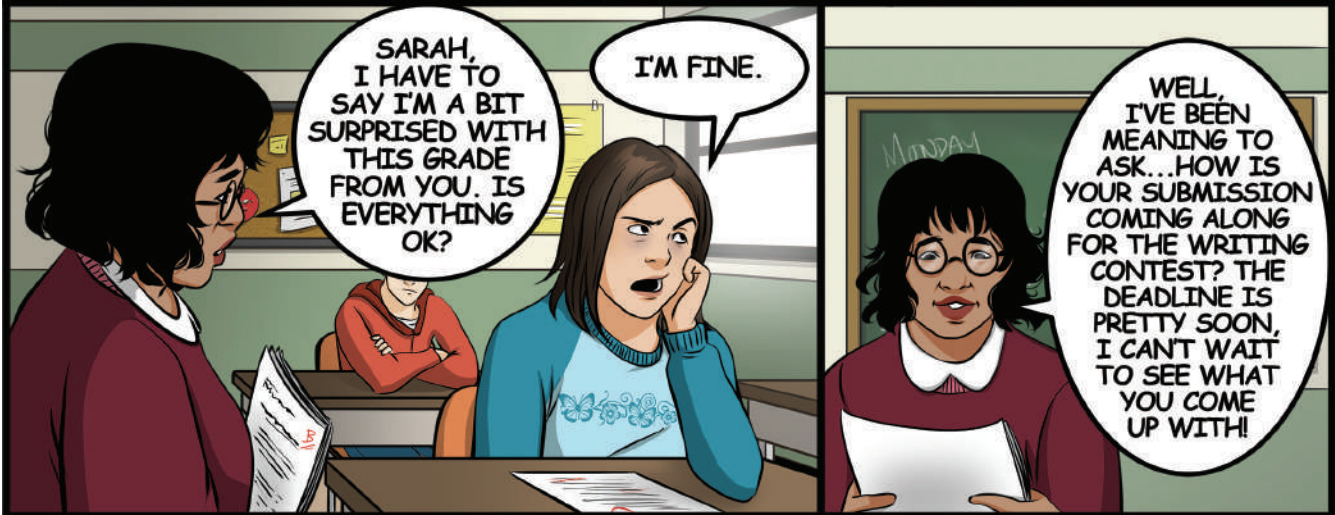
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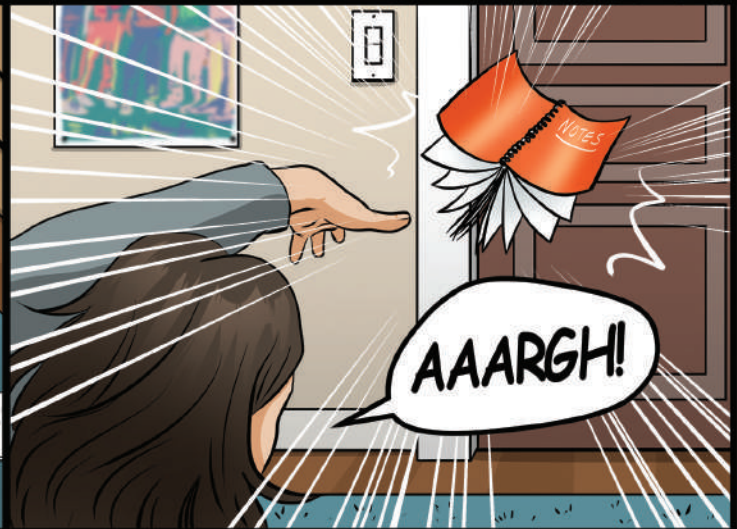
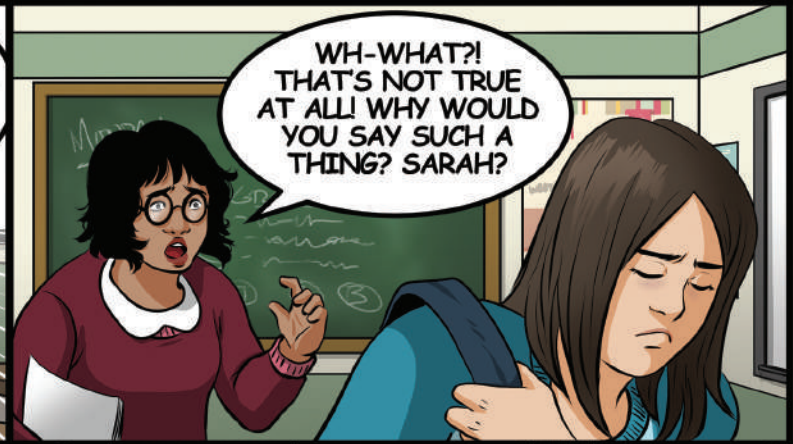


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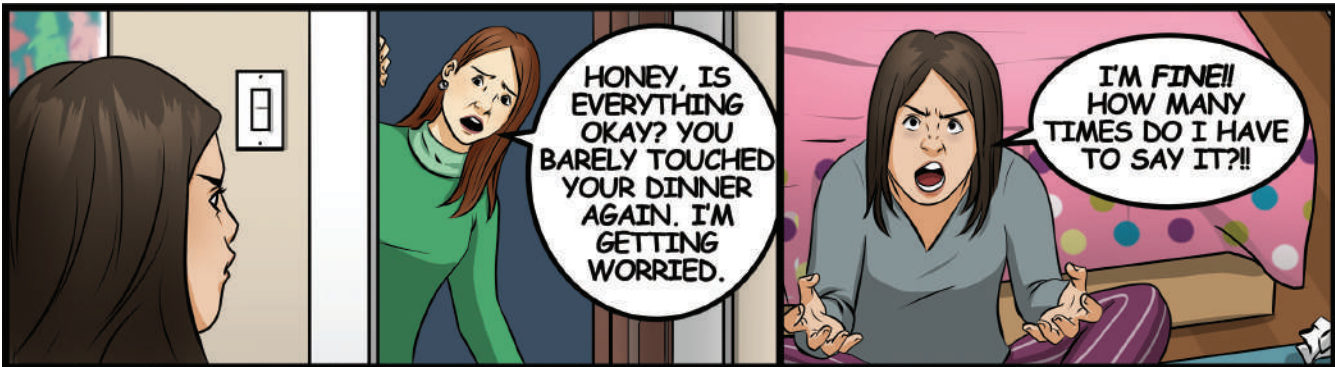
I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

“

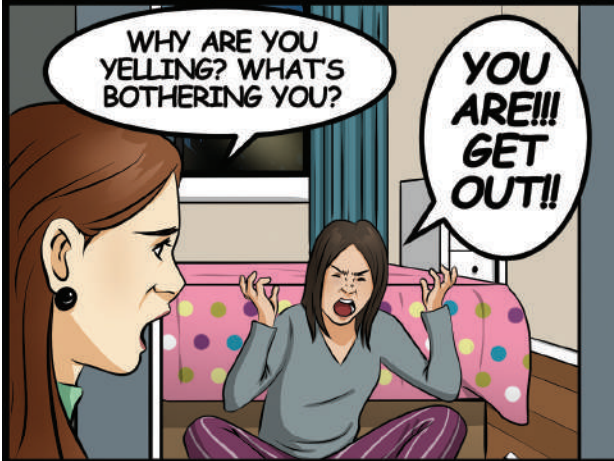
Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Act 4:12 (KJV)



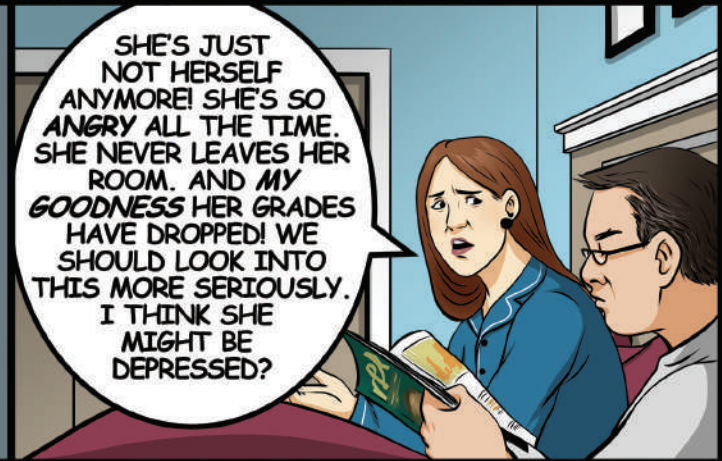
HONEY, IS EVERYTHING OKAY? YOU BARELY TOUCHED YOUR DINNER AGAIN. I'M GETTING WORRIED.

I'M FINE! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAY IT?!!

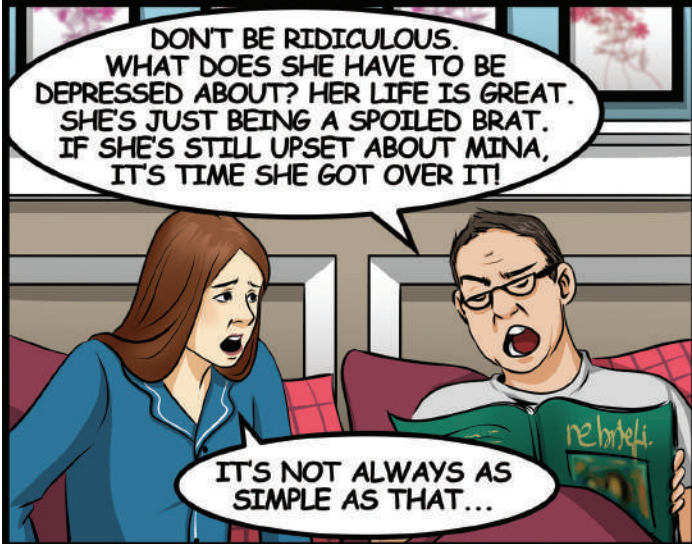


WHY ARE YOU YELLING? WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU?

YOU ARE!!! GET OUT!!

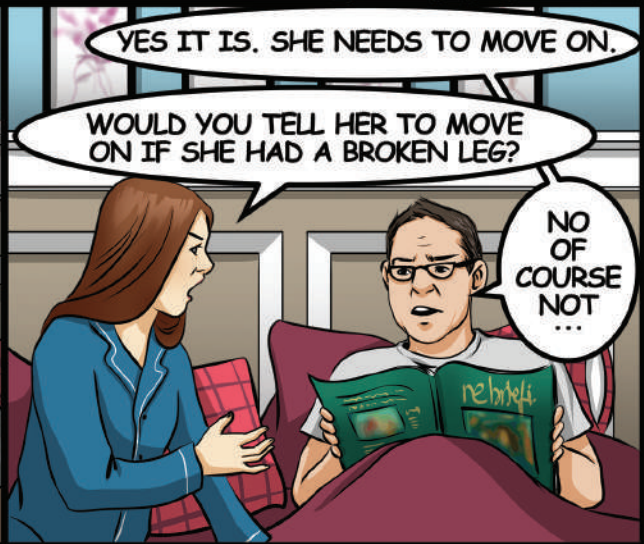


SHE'S JUST NOT HERSELF ANYMORE! SHE'S SO ANGRY ALL THE TIME. SHE NEVER LEAVES HER ROOM. AND MY GOODNESS HER GRADES HAVE DROPPED! WE SHOULD LOOK INTO THIS MORE SERIOUSLY. I THINK SHE MIGHT BE DEPRESSED?



DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. WHAT DOES SHE HAVE TO BE DEPRESSED ABOUT? HER LIFE IS GREAT. SHE'S JUST BEING A SPOILED BRAT. IF SHE'S STILL UPSET ABOUT MINA, IT'S TIME SHE GOT OVER IT!

IT'S NOT ALWAYS AS SIMPLE AS THAT...



YES IT IS. SHE NEEDS TO MOVE ON.

WOULD YOU TELL HER TO MOVE ON IF SHE HAD A BROKEN LEG?

NO OF COURSE NOT ...

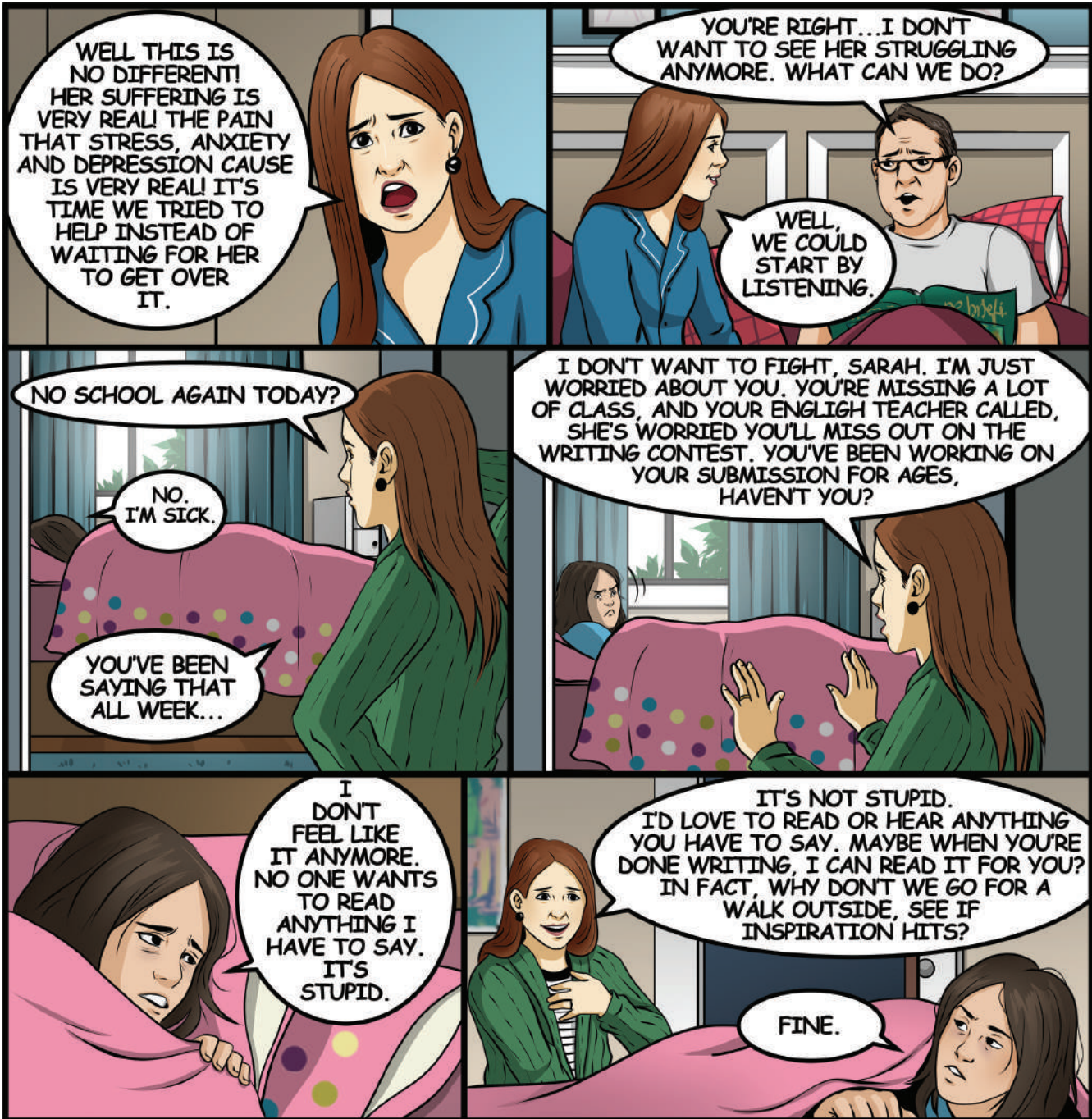


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WELL THIS IS NO DIFFERENT! HER SUFFERING IS VERY REAL! THE PAIN THAT STRESS, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION CAUSE IS VERY REAL! IT'S TIME WE TRIED TO HELP INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR HER TO GET OVER IT.

YOU'RE RIGHT...I DONT WANT TO SEE HER STRUGGLING ANYMORE. WHAT CAN WE DO?

WELL, WE COULD START BY LISTENING.

NO SCHOOL AGAIN TODAY?

NO. I'M SICK.

YOU'VE BEEN SAYING THAT ALL WEEK...

I DONT WANT TO FIGHT, SARAH. I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE MISSING A LOT OF CLASS, AND YOUR ENGLISH TEACHER CALLED, SHE'S WORRIED YOU'LL MISS OUT ON THE WRITING CONTEST. YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON YOUR SUBMISSION FOR AGES, HAVENT YOU?

I DONT FEEL LIKE IT ANYMORE. NO ONE WANTS TO READ ANYTHING I HAVE TO SAY. IT'S STUPID.

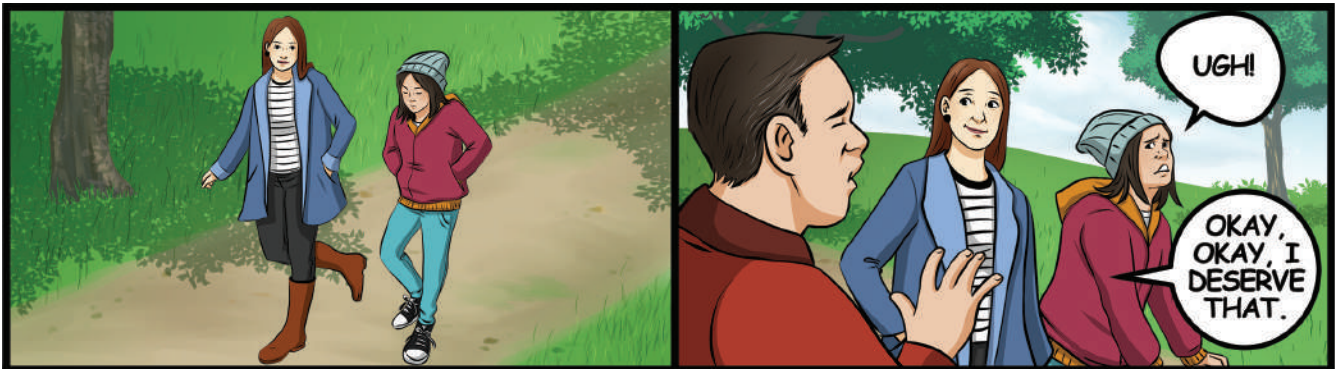
IT'S NOT STUPID. I'D LOVE TO READ OR HEAR ANYTHING YOU HAVE TO SAY. MAYBE WHEN YOU'RE DONE WRITING, I CAN READ IT FOR YOU? IN FACT, WHY DONT WE GO FOR A WALK OUTSIDE, SEE IF INSPIRATION HITS?

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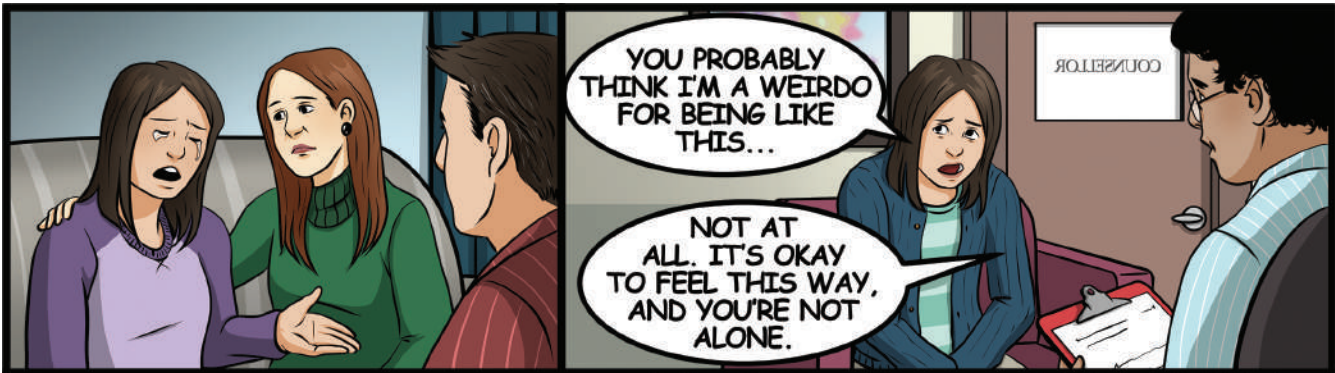
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YOU PROBABLY THINK I'M A WEIRDO FOR BEING LIKE THIS...

NOT AT ALL. IT'S OKAY TO FEEL THIS WAY, AND YOU'RE NOT ALONE.



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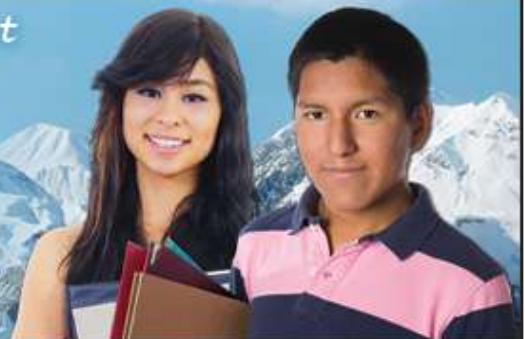
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I WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS | SUPPORTED THROUGH STRUGGLE

I wasn't always like this. Growing up, I remember feeling an innocent sense of happiness. I had no idea what was in store for me, and I didn't care much. I didn't worry or stress about tomorrow, next week, or a year from then. Why would I? How was I to know that one day everything would change.

It all started when I was only 10 years old. I found myself feeling angry for no specific reason. Angry at myself, my family, my friends, and anyone else who was in my presence. I would cry, a lot. Mainly at night when I was laying in my bed, all alone with my thoughts. I didn't tell anyone. How could I? What would I say? There wasn't a reason for this, and if there was, I couldn't pinpoint it. These thoughts would flood my brain at any given time and there was no way for me to control it no matter how hard I tried. Therefore, I stopped trying to control the thoughts.

After three years went by, my feelings started to change. I was mad at myself and only myself. I wasn't mad at the girls at my school for making fun of the way I looked, acted, and dressed, or my family for not being able to see through my fake smile and realize that I was truly dying on the inside. I was solely mad at myself, because at the time, it seemed as if it was only my fault. This is when the self-harm began. It was my release. I felt that I needed to be punished for the way I was. I felt useless and empty, like there was no way to escape the dark hole that I had been stuck in for so long. There was no light at the end of my tunnel.

I was so absorbed by these gloomy thoughts that I started to dream about them. I would have nightmares about committing suicide. I didn't want to fall asleep at night, fearful of experiencing the vivid dreams. As if these feelings weren't exhausting enough, I now had

to add a lack of sleep to the mix. My days were long, my mind was lost, and my health was plummeting at a rapid pace.

One day, I broke. I completely broke down and revealed how weak I was. This was the first time I felt the slightest bit of hope. I realized that I had friends and family, and at least one of them was bound to care if I told them. One of them was bound to give me another option. I reached out to my parents and told them about how I was feeling. I told them how long I was feeling this way, and what I had been doing to myself. As most parents would, they were shocked and heartbroken. I was immediately taken to the hospital. The nurse and doctor questioned me, asking me why I had these negative feelings towards myself. The one question that I had been asking myself for years and still had no answer. They claimed that it must be for show, and I must just be looking for attention. 'Crying wolf' as some may say. Have you ever felt your heart sink so deep in your stomach that you become nauseous? That's how I felt in that moment.

While sitting in front of my parents, who were wishing to better understand the situation, the people at the hospital made me feel like less than I was already feeling - which I honestly didn't think was possible. I began to question everything I felt. My parents sent me to counsellors and life coaches. To be completely honest, I hated it. I didn't have any problems that needed to be solved. We lacked conversation as there was no certain situation that caused me to feel this way. This is what was so difficult for people to understand. Why was I sad if I had nothing to be sad about? It turned out that these professionals couldn't save me either. I decided I would attempt to figure it out on my own. I knew I was depressed, and I didn't care about the cause anymore. If I wanted to get better, I would have to start making some changes in my life.

I started to work on myself every day. I began to act more confident than I actually was, so that maybe one day I could truly embody that type of confidence. I was involved in many sports which kept me busy, and of course exercise is always a positive. I started hanging out with my friends and family more often. Having people around distracted me from my true feelings. Throughout high school I did a really good job of not letting people know how I felt. Faking a smile and acting "normal" became easier and easier. I went through all the normal teenage issues; boyfriends, mean girls, heartbreak, family drama, and friends becoming enemies. These problems fueled the fire that was growing inside of me, although I kept myself composed.

I visited my school counsellor to talk about my high school problems, only to feel as though I was putting in some type of effort to better myself. The problem was that the happiness I desired to obtain felt so distant and impossible to reach. When seeing my friends and family smiling, laughing, enjoying life, and experiencing unconditional happiness, I felt like I was missing out on so much. I couldn't help but wonder what that felt like. I craved the feeling of happiness that I knew I encountered as a kid, but I couldn't remember what that really felt like. It wasn't until drugs and alcohol became a part of my life that I thought I found this feeling.

It began with the feeling of being intoxicated. I didn't base my actions on others' expectations. The millions of questions that usually raced through my mind seemed to disappear. It was fun and exciting. It was when I was drunk that I finally felt happiness, or what I assumed happiness felt like. I enjoyed it so I continued to do it. That wasn't enough though; I wanted to be even happier. If I only got to be happy for a few hours on the weekend, then I want to be as happy as I could possibly be during that time. Therefore, I started doing drugs.

The high was a lot better than the drunkenness. I became addicted to feeling this happiness that I felt when I was high. It was almost as if I was a completely different person. When I graduated high school, things only got worse. Then began the clubs, the after parties, the hotel rooms. I was addicted to drugs and spending money that I didn't even have. My friends and family eventually started to realize that something was wrong. I didn't lie about it; I knew I had an issue. I knew that I needed help and that I was getting worse as time went on. So, I listened to the people who loved me, and I went to my doctor. At this point I was already taking a small dosage of depression and anxiety pills, only to show that I was accepting the help my loved ones were giving me.

The nightmares had started again, so I knew that I would have to do something soon. The doctor concluded that I needed more help than just pills. He contacted the crisis team and arranged for me to have a meeting with them. I was very open with them and told them about my life, how the depression had taken over me and how I really didn't want to be alive anymore. The only thing that I felt like I was living for was a high or being drunk, which I knew I couldn't keep up forever. The crisis team thought it would be best that I go spend time in a crisis centre located in a nearby city. I was scared, but I knew that if I wanted to get better, I needed to go.

This home was life changing. At first, I hated it. I was terrified to be in a place where I knew nobody. I met other people who felt exactly like I did, which was a relief to know that I wasn't the only one who felt this way. The nurses told me that I have chronic depression, which is why there wasn't any specific cause to me feeling depressed. The home gave me the motivation I needed to help myself. No more drugs, no more alcohol, and no more feeling lifeless. I began to take the right amount of medication and regulated my sleep. These major life changes got me back on my feet.

I lost some people along the way, people who were once very important to me. I will always treasure the memories I have with them and will never blame them for leaving me. I was a mess, a mess that should have been cleaned up a long time ago. A mess that wasn't anybody's responsibility but my own. As for those who stuck by my side, I can't thank you enough. They saw the good that lied far underneath the bad. They saved me. They were the reason that I kept living a life that I didn't want to live.

I take pills every day. I cry some nights for no reason. Certain things hurt me a little more than they may hurt others. I have to try hard at being happy in life. Sometimes it's hard. I don't

think it'll ever be easy. This is my life, and I WANT to live it.

After experiencing a years-long battle with anxiety and depression (as documented in the article above), Mackenzie Hiebert is finally moving on to her next chapter.

Mackenzie, now 24-years-old, began having feelings of extreme sadness and anxiousness when she was just a child. Not knowing where the feelings were coming from, she kept them hidden until she was a teenager. Around this time, her father Derek noticed she had self-harm marks on her arms.

"My dad noticed the self-harm first. I didn't tell him. I think he and my mom then had a conversation about it. I started to realize something was majorly wrong. I did see a few counsellors, but it never worked out for me," she says. "I needed to be told that it wasn't situational. I was struggling to get to that realization. I didn't have to fix a certain situation [to resolve the depression], it's just how I am with my emotions and my body."

Her emotions were uncharted territory at the time, and when she did reach out to those around her to express the negative mindset she was in, she was greeted with unwavering support from family.

Her parents, Derek and Robyn, though separated, were there for her (and continue to be there for her) through every tough situation. Both of them have been an immense support system in her life even when things were rocky. Derek moved away to a different province when she was in her late teens, but their bond overcame the hard times, and to this day he remains someone she can always turn to for help and assurance.

"Having them [my parents] not look at me like I was crazy or something was definitely helpful," says Mackenzie. "Even after the divorce, I don't ever remember them [my parents] fighting, or even while they were married. They always put us first."

Her dad recalls the time when he first came to the realization about what Mackenzie was going through, noting that she was in her early teens.

"She seemed on the outside very happy, she was really involved in sports and doing other things like all of our kids were. We really didn't notice all of that [her mental struggles] until later on," says Derek. "She was about 14 when she started inflicting self-pain. I picked her up one day, and her long sleeve shirt had moved, and I noticed some scars. She was about fourteen or fifteen years old at that time."

This moment led to Mackenzie's parents wanting to learn more about what was happening and how they could get her the help that she needed. It was an uphill battle, because as with most mental health issues, not many people know where it stems from or which care to seek out.

Her mom Robyn, a nurse, was Mackenzie's rock during her illness, and remains close with her today. While Derek was often there over the phone or via text to support Mackenzie, Robyn was always around physically to assist her in her care. Whether it was driving her to the hospital or just listening, Robyn helped her daughter weather some of her toughest storms.

"She's very caring, she is a saint. She's done everything for me and my sister and brother. She's incredible," says Mackenzie. "She doesn't necessarily understand it [my mental struggles], because she never went through it, but she was learning how to react and help someone with a mental illness while I was learning how to cope with it."

With a strong support system in place, Mackenzie then started a journey to get professional help. She went through different counsellors, medications, and other care tactics to try and help her anxiety and depression, most of which weren't working the way they had hoped. But through all of this, her parents were always there to support her whether in person or over the phone when she needed to talk.

"We started to truly understand some of the things she was going through. It's tough when you have no control, and the worst part was that she had no control. She didn't really even understand herself or what she was going through, or why she was having these thoughts and feelings," says Derek. "She felt

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love from her parents and had all of the opportunities that she ever wanted or needed. It really seemed like it was some sort of chemical imbalance that was throwing her off – giving her these moods and thoughts.”

When she was in her late teens, Mackenzie was able to enter a home (with help from the hospital and her mom by her side) that specializes in helping those with mental health issues such as severe anxiety and depression. This was a major shift in her journey to healing. Going to the home was something that her dad and mom supported wholeheartedly, and everyone in her family was ecstatic that Mackenzie was able to progress into a better phase of life.

“When I went to the home, they made me realize that I didn’t have situational depression, it was just a general depression,” says Mackenzie. “I had been constantly looking for what was making me upset and what was making me feel like that, and I could never pinpoint it. It was so confusing and super frustrating.”

After her temporary stay, Mackenzie was finally on a more positive path. She was no longer confused about her mental state, but it would still be a few years until she fully had a grasp on what coping methods were best suited to her.

“It did take a while to figure out which coping mechanisms were going to work specifically for me. I did change my medication when I was there [at the home] so my body had to get used to that as well. But it was definitely a turning point. It wasn’t until I went to the home that I was fully ready to heal and to move past everything,” says Mackenzie.

Being a parent of a child or teen who is struggling with their mental health is not easy. Navigating their emotions and the ways to help them can take an overwhelming toll, but the best thing a parent can do is be there for their child – even if that means simply listening to them with an open mind.

Derek wants other parents to know that listening and learning alongside your child are the main ways you can be supportive. Without your support, your child may not end up in a positive place in life like Mackenzie is in now.

“Be open to listening to them. Seek to really understand what the problem is, and don’t offer advice [to the child/teen] based on things you don’t know. That was a big part of it,” says Derek.

Mackenzie is extremely open about the struggles she faced. Because she has overcome many of those struggles, she wants others who are also dealing with mental health issues (and their parents) to know that they are not alone. Her main advice is to ensure that when you reach out for help, that you are fully ready to accept it in order to properly heal and overcome your obstacles.

“You have to want help. Even from a parent’s perspective, if they know their child is going through something, I’m sure it’s the most difficult thing ever, but if the person doesn’t want to get better then I don’t know how much you can help them,” she says. “I think it’s up to the individual to recognize they need it, and then change how they are living to get better. I reached out for help early on and met with counsellors, but I don’t think I was ready. I don’t think I truly wanted to get help.”

Now in her mid-twenties with a bundle of joy on the way, Mackenzie is in the best place mentally that she’s ever been. She is off medication and is doing extremely well.

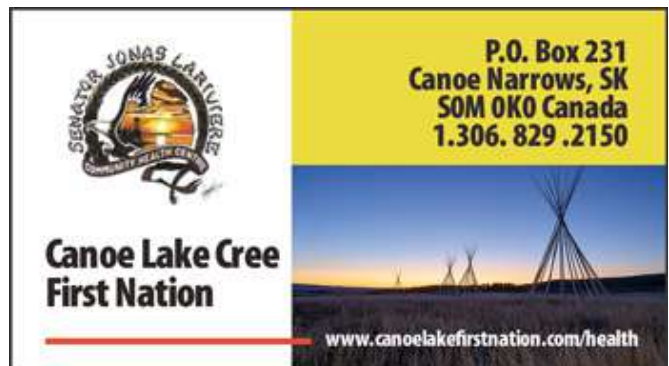
She and her parents still maintain a strong relationship, even amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Mackenzie notes that her and her dad have been continually texting and video calling whenever the opportunity arises, and she can’t wait for when they can spend more time together in person.

“I keep him updated and text him all of the time,” she says. “I’m an adult doing my own thing. With the phone calls and Face-time that are available now – it’s a lot easier to communicate.”

She and her mom are also in constant contact, in fact they see each other almost daily as Mackenzie works in the town where her mom lives (in Manitoba, Canada). They live just half an hour apart. “Her and my sister are my go-to people,” she says.

Mackenzie’s story is one of resilience, one that her mom and dad played a large part in. Derek is quick to point out and reinforce the notion of listening; It’s the main thing that got them through and led them to the place they are in now. He wants to stress to other parents that listening, understanding, and reaching out for help are the keys to success for any parent and child weathering a mental health crisis together.

“When we truly just listened to understand, that’s when she really opened up,” he says. “She then felt comfortable and safe talking to us about it.”





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How I Survived Depression and Found Courage To Tell My Story

Lubna Albadr



My depression began with spontaneous spurts of crying. I cried on the bus on the way to school. I cried looking at pictures of my neighbor's cat. I cried when I woke up and I cried before going to sleep. At a certain point in time, however, you run out of tears and your body reacts by damaging itself further, so I stopped eating. Food became the least important activity of the day. I ate for sustenance, and at times, water was all I needed to keep going. Until I looked in the mirror and saw the outline of my ribcage poking out, my cheekbones contouring my otherwise chubby face, my legs so thin and weak and unable to carry the weight of what was left of me.

When I no longer enjoyed food, I decided to take things a step further. I was no longer content with crying and lack of food ... I needed something physical to override the mental battle I was enduring. I came up with the theory that when the emotional pain becomes too much, one should occupy themselves with physical pain. And then I believed this theory. And then I lived by it. I saw a pair of orange scissors in my room, and they became my best friends.

enduring. I came up with the theory that when the emotional pain becomes too much, one should occupy themselves with physical pain. And then I believed this theory. And then I lived by it. I saw a pair of orange scissors in my room, and they became my best

friends.

I was covered in band-aids and then when time passed by, I ended up with clear scars on several parts of my body. I had lost complete control of myself. I did not recognize myself anymore. I was never taught about mental illness, and I was far too ashamed to seek help. To admit that you have depression is to validate its existence. I refused to believe I was sick, and I refused to let anyone in. I bottled up all the negative feelings that rendered me a 90lb mess of a person.

A few months went by and my depression became a part of me. I went about my life, thin as a feather; careless as a whisper. Waking up in the morning was the start of a new battle that I could not avoid. My life was going. I continued to suppress the pain by keeping it inside, and it seemed to work. Until my most feared – yet awaited – day came. The day I decided to end it all. The day where everything became nothing. The day I became nothing. The day the pain became too much to handle and I decided I never wanted to see another sunrise.

I could see a reflection of myself, attempting to end the life I was given. I had no purpose. I did not belong. And atop the feeling of emptiness, I knew that I no longer needed to exist. I started to imagine my life 15 years ago, but I couldn't remember anything

about it, and I thought that death will be exactly like that: a permanent feeling of nothingness. I grabbed my weapon with committed hands, ready to let everything go in spite of the protests inside my head. I saw my reflection crying, screaming, wanting to be gone.

But I couldn't do it.

I woke up the next day, trying to remember the events that occurred before I blacked-out. My eyes were puffy and my hair a mess. I felt so weak, yet so empowered. I put on my clothes and went to school. I ran into the arms of my best friends, and I bawled my eyes out, trying to recall the disgust I felt and the pain I endured. One minute I was crying with my head buried in my hands, the next, I was in the waiting room of the counselor's office. I still remember the feeling of fear that consumed me. I had never told anyone of my depression and what it caused me to do. I wasn't ready to show that side of me to anyone, but I was frozen still in my seat, waiting for my name to be called out.

I never knew what a therapist's job was, but I know that when I was sat in that very well-lit office, venting out all of the trapped feelings inside of me, I felt a sense of relief like never before. My body was sweating and my eyes crying, endlessly. I can safely admit that I felt good for the first time in years. I never understood the impeccable impact of human connection. The moment I opened up to another person, I felt a heavy weight lifted off my chest, freeing my caged soul from all the darkness I endured for far too long. I felt free for the first time, and it wasn't until that moment that I realized that I just want to be free.

I was taught to create an outlet for my anger and sadness, and so I did. I picked up my pen and I found the old, dusty, empty notebook that I was gifted on my doomed 18th birthday, and I began to tell my story. I never wanted people to know what I went through, but I knew that I may have some helpful advice for those who feel trapped. I too felt alone and without purpose, like the world was a piece of paper crumbling up around me. But I persisted. And I lived.

Talk to your parents; talk to your friends; talk to the countless amount of counselors that are available to you. When you feel like drowning and unable to breathe, there is always a way out, and it will be worth it in the end when you look back at the turmoil that took place and see yourself as the wounded hero who overcame one of the hardest obstacles imaginable. Mental illness is, truly, the silent killer, but we mustn't let it determine the course of our lives. I do not regret what happened to me, I only regret not seeking help as soon as I could have.

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13 THOUGHTFUL WAYS TO HELP A FRIEND WHO HAS DEPRESSION

Friends are often the first to know that one of their pals is struggling with depression. A sudden loss of appetite at lunchtime, plummeting grades, or a lack of interest in a favourite extracurricular can indicate that a friend is having a hard time. However, it's not always easy to know what you can do about it.

Although you can't fix your friend's depression, there are little things you can do to make his or her life better.

Here are 13 ways how:

1. Acknowledge their feelings

Perhaps the most important thing you can do for a friend with depression is to take his or her feelings seriously. Just because you can't

relate doesn't mean their feelings aren't real, and depression means she can't just "snap out of it." If you're not sure how to validate emotions you don't understand, try phrases like "That must be really painful" or "I see how much that hurts you," rather than trying to fix or dismiss feelings.

2. Be informed

It's harder to feel empathy toward someone who's depressed if you don't understand the underlying cause. Educate yourself on depression and how it's a medical condition, not a personality flaw.

3. Say no to stigma

If you hear someone invalidating your friend's emotions, speak out! Mental health stigma stops teens from asking for help and may increase the risk of suicide, according to Berkeley Wellness.

4. Check in regularly

Depression affects a person's feelings of self-worth. It doesn't take long for negative thoughts to take hold, so send regular check-in texts to let a friend know she or he is on your mind.

5. Plan stress-busting activities

Too many teens turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with mental illness, but it's a poor strategy for stress relief and could lead to a serious substance abuse problem. Take your friend's mind off depressive thoughts with activities that are fun and healthy, like playing laser tag, starting a pick-up game of basketball, or going on a nature hike.

6. Volunteer together

Volunteering builds up a person's sense of self-worth, something your friend could probably use right now. Find a local charity you can volunteer with or identify elderly neighbours in need of a hand.

7. Share a new hobby

Since you can't be with your friend 24/7, why not start a hobby you can work on separately or together? A hobby provides a healthy distraction from negative thoughts and sharing it with a friend makes it harder to succumb to the loss of interest that often plagues people with depression.

8. Let her play with your dog

Dogs are incredible therapy for depression. Not only do dogs provide the positive feels you need when you're experiencing the effects of anxiety and depression, but they validate the presence of emotion – whatever it is – without judgment, and without the unfortunate stigmas that exist in some corners when it comes to mental illness. If your friend doesn't have a dog of her own, why not let her hang out with yours?

9. Send a self-care package

Everyone needs the occasional self-care session, but especially so when they're dealing with mental health issues. Treat your friend to a care package full of self-care goodies like bath bombs, favourite foods and a great book.

10. Be patient

When your efforts aren't met with the enthusiasm and gratefulness you were hoping for, it's important to remember that it's the depression speaking, not your friend. While you shouldn't sacrifice your own well-being, it's important to be patient – even when it's hard.

11. Speak up if someone suicidal

Talk of suicide should always be taken seriously, especially when you know someone is struggling with depression. If your friend has started talking about ending their life, TeensHealth recommends that you listen without judging and offer reassurance that you

care about their wellbeing. If you think your friend might be in danger, stay close to make sure he or she isn't left alone, according to the website.

12. Talk to someone

Despite the fact that 1 in 20 teens will experience depression, many never tell anyone about it. It's hard to overcome the fear of judgment, so your friend may need some extra support when it comes to asking for help. Encourage your friend to talk with their parents or another trusted adult so he or she can get the mental health care they need.

13. Be the same great friend you've always been

Depression is an isolating disease. Although sufferers often push loved ones away, this is when they need your love and support most. While you can't fix your friend's depression (and shouldn't try to), you can help simply by being there.

Depression is hard to understand if you've never experienced it, but you don't have to have a history with mental illness to be a good friend.

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LET'S TALK ABOUT 'DEPRESSION' - IS IT WHAT I THINK IT IS?

"My friend is depressed, she recently lost her job."

"My uncle is going through depression after his wife left."

How many times have you heard of such cases? Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses worldwide and has become one of the most cited disorders practically by anyone. With this, distinguishing who is depressed from those who are only tossing around the word casually is hard.

In this article, we will discuss what depression is and how to tell if one is depressed.

What is depression?

This can be termed as a mental health disorder, which is mainly characterized by persistent stress and lack of interest in people and other things. It may also result in impaired judgment and moods, therefore undermining the patient's daily life.

Depression may result from a range of triggers which may be social sources or even biological and psychological triggers. These triggers alter the brain function and in return, result in a persistent feeling of loss of interest, sadness, and being overwhelmed.

These changes lead to a range of physical symptoms which include:

Lack of appetite – a depressed person will lose interest in many things, and eating is one of them. This is the primary reason why depressed persons end up losing a lot of weight and energy levels.

Sleep disorders – the victims may either have trouble falling asleep. It could be the opposite, and you find that the depressed person is sleeping more than an average person would.

Lack of concentration – depression has been a significant cause of lost jobs. The victims cannot focus on the office, and the boss has no option but to fire them. It could be that due to lack of concentration, you may unknowingly cause accidents at work and also, your productivity will go down. This happens at schools, too, to the point that bright students start failing in their exams. What's more? A parent may lose concentration and loses track of everything in the house.

Loss of self-esteem – depressed individuals suffer a lot with self-esteem, and this is the reason they do not want to be around anyone. They are very cautious about their appearance and what others think about their situation. It could be that they went through a significant loss of blow or have an illness that makes them feel less worthy.

Suicidal thoughts – if you know of someone who committed suicide, or has constant suicidal thoughts, chances are that they are depressed. It gets to a point where the patient does not find anything worth living for due to the darkness inside them.

Behavioural changes – your friend has lately been acting like some stranger, or you can barely recognize them. They have become more aggressive, rude, or no longer share stuff like they used to. They could be depressed. Maybe they have started coming to work or school later



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than usual and seem to be deep in their thoughts. Do not forget to check how they are doing.

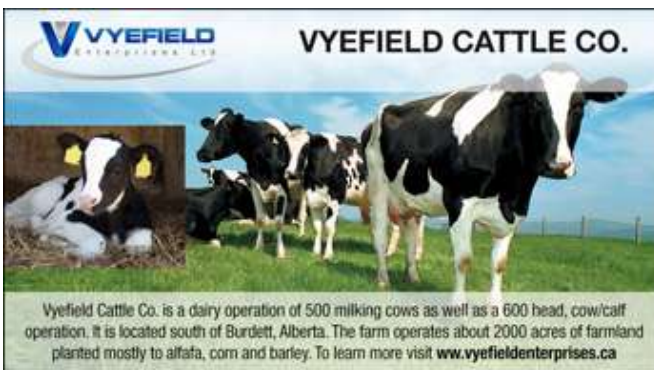
How should you handle depression?

From these symptoms, it is evident that depression is not just any other condition that you should take lightly. No one should try to take this depression on themselves.

Instead, any depressed person or anyone who starts to experience these symptoms after undergoing a painful stage should seek professional assistance. Talk therapy in particular is a highly effective form of treatment. You should seek the help of a therapist and let the expert guide you on how to heal from the killer condition.

Additionally and fortunately, the internet has made things easier. You can even self-test yourself online with a depression test if you suspect that you could be going through depression before things get out of hand. You should, however, note that the online tests are not diagnoses.

Depression kills dreams, destroys relationships and kills people. If you are suffering from depression, you should get immediate help.



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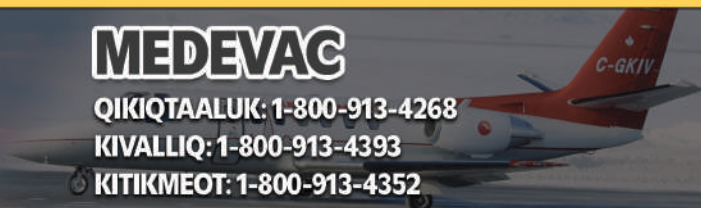
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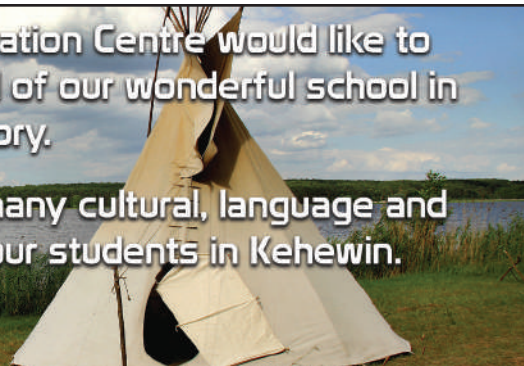
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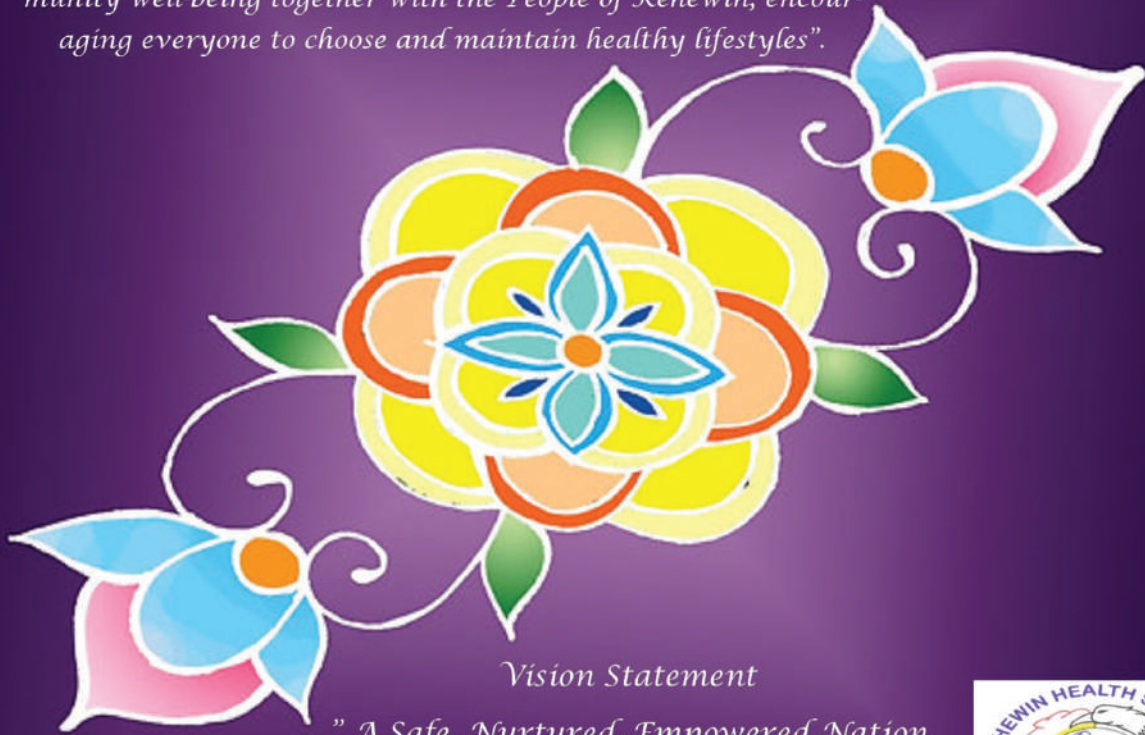
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DEPRESSION

Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses in Canada and will affect about 1 in 8 people at some point in their lives. As someone who has struggled with depression for most of my life, I would like to share some of my insights and knowledge with you. The first and most important thing that you need to know: dealing with depression, or any other mental illness, is NOT something to be ashamed of.

When I was growing up and started to go to therapy and take medications, I was told not to tell anyone about my issues because what I was going through was private and would make others see me as weak. Thankfully, I now know better. People who struggle with mental illness are some of the strongest people around. If you have ever struggled with your mental health, then you know how much strength it takes to get out of bed in the morning, take care of yourself, go to school or work, and pretend to be okay while doing the same tasks as everyone around you. And that strength that you cultivated while you were in a dark place is going to make you a superstar when you find your way out!

Depression has many causes and different degrees of severity, so never think that what you are feeling is less valid because someone else's life may seem harder than yours. Don't ever compare yourself to another. You are unique and so are your experiences. Something else that you should keep in mind, depression can come from more than just hardship. When there are a lot of changes in your life, even if they are good changes, they can still cause enough stress to trigger a depressive episode. For example: the anticipation of seeing a lot of family over the holidays and the different celebrations that you need to attend, while usually enjoyable, can throw you into depression if you don't have the tools to cope.

You will go through your own unique struggles and remember, adults struggle too. I recently went into another depression in 2021 after I got a great job and my first home. The stress of trying to do my best at work, to go above and beyond what was expected to ensure my good standing, and then moving into my house and trying to make it mine, caused me a lot of stress. This ended up affecting my mental health for months before I found the right therapist. They taught me tools to take care of myself and be kinder to myself when I thought that my perceived shortcomings would cost me my job and my home.

Here are some coping techniques that you can try and see if they work for you:

Socialize – if you are feeling isolated and normally spend time with loved ones and friends.

Exercise – even if you can only muster up the energy to do a slow walk around the block or down the road and back, the exertion will give you a boost of endorphins and make you feel a little better.

Eat Healthy – if you can afford to, try to eat more balanced meals and snacks and maybe try taking some b vitamins to give your brain a little boost.

Be Creative – picking up a creative hobby (drawing, painting, crafts, etc.) can help to deal with your feelings and bring you out of your own head for a while.

Sleep – try to get enough sleep, most people need between 7-9hrs per night. When we sleep, it allows our brains to rest, work through the previous day's events, and reset for the next day. Try looking up sleep hygiene for some ideas on how to get a better sleep.

Relax – find something that you find truly relaxing and calming. Maybe it's listening to music or watching a favorite show with your most comfortable blanket and pillow?

Boost your Self-Esteem – do something nice for yourself like fixing your makeup, style your hair or get a new style, take a photo of how good you look (because no matter how you feel, you always look wonderful), write down the good things about yourself, or treat yourself to something nice.

There are a lot of different coping skills, it just takes trial and error to find what works for you. My best suggestion is to find a therapist who you are comfortable with and who you work well with. They can help you with your coping skills and be a great sounding board when you need it. Look at downloading mental health apps for your phone like Wysa, Headspace, or 7 Cups to find additional support (many are free or have free features). And you could search inspirational mental health quotes and find ones that speak to you. "The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen." — Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

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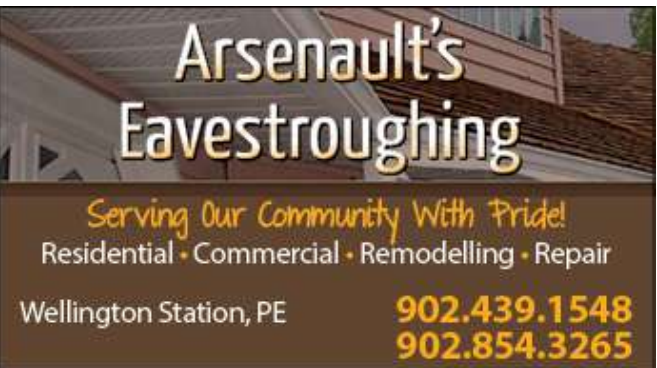
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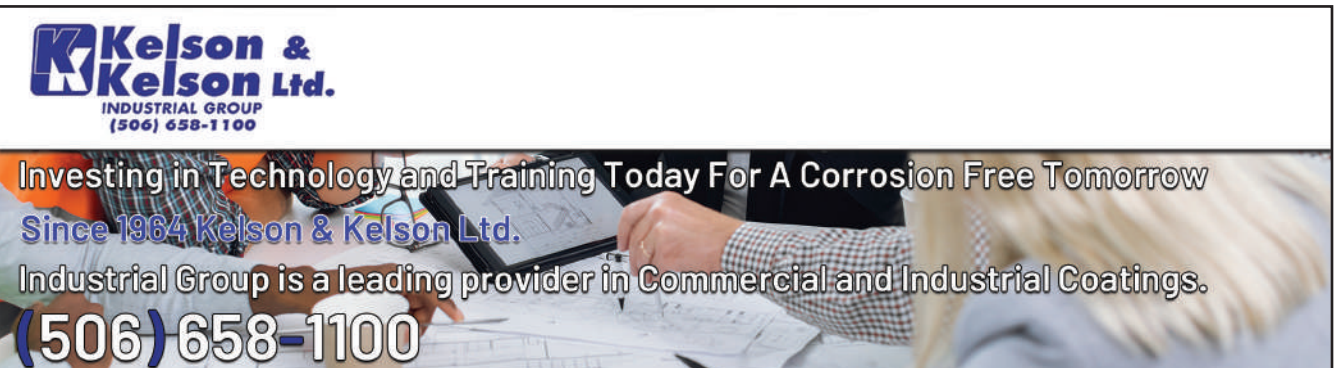
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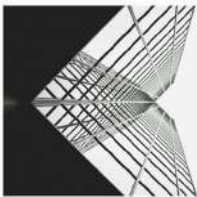
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AN OPEN LETTER TO ANYONE STRUGGLING WITH DEPRESSION

Would anyone really notice if you were gone? Would anyone care? Their lives would be easier without you and you wouldn't burden them with your depressed feelings and sadness all the time. It takes a toll on them; you see their frustration. If you weren't in their lives, they could move on. Time heals everything so they will be fine without you.

You couldn't be more wrong. Your depressive thoughts led you to believe this. There is a big difference between what you think and the reality of your situations. Depression does this to all of us. It takes over our lives and makes us believe that everyone would be better without us. What depression doesn't allow you to do is see the reality and truth of your relationships. Depression digs its claws into your emotions and turns them into dark, black thoughts of life without you.

Depression can foster suicidal thoughts. You wouldn't have to endure the pain anymore and it would be easier for everyone if you were gone. The depression stems from pain that you have either dealt with or suppressed. As hard as it seems to talk to someone about it — or write about it — the end result is worth it.

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to let out those scary thoughts because the depression wants you to keep it all inside. It wants you to think about all the bad in your life so it can continue to do its job and bring you down. It's important for you to realize that depression is causing these thoughts and emotions. Who are the positives in your life? Really think. It may be the obvious people or it could be the people you don't think of. People care about you and you can see it if you remove the depression claws.

Think of all of those relationships you've made. You have an effect on each and every person that, in reality, is positive. Depression makes you think you are meaningless to them. They have plenty of other people in their lives and they won't miss you. Take the time to ask them about your relationship and why you are important to them. The people in your life wouldn't be there if they didn't want to. But depression tells you otherwise.

Depression takes you to that deep, dark place so you need to separate reality from your thoughts. Write down your thought and then either ask people their opinion about it or write what the thought would be without the depression. It will help refocus your thoughts. You have to get out of your head in order to focus on reality. Prove your depressive thought wrong!

Something in your life made you fall into this darkness. Maybe it's even multiple things. Write about them or talk to a friend so that you can get past it. It won't be easy but life isn't always about living in the present. You will get better and you will have the life you hope for. It takes focus and determination along with a few special people to help get you to that happy place. The most important question you can ask yourself is if you want to be controlled by the depression or if you want to control it.

The only way to really take control of the depression is to realize your own reality. Ask people, get opinions, talk to family and maintain those relationships. You need those people through this. Talk to a therapist or confide in someone that can help motivate you to keep your focus on reality. Choose to control your depression! It no longer gets the first and last word in your thoughts. It doesn't get the satisfaction of taking you to the deepest, darkest place in which you decide to end it all.

You were born for a reason and to serve a wonderful purpose. Reality can prove that but depression will try to separate the truth. Fighting through the depression is not easy. Success is never easy, though, so don't expect it to be. The person who succeeds at a task does so with great perseverance and determination.

If you live your life one day at a time and win that daily battle, the end result becomes a lifetime of happiness. Your depressive thoughts can't win if you won't let it. Be the one to change you. You have the power because you matter. Fight the depression because your future will be one to look forward to. Let your history be history and motivate yourself to create the future you want.



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