Fighting the Blues

January 20, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

Riding the subway I'm looking at the empty subway seat across from me and it says, "Please give seat to people with disabilities." The word that struck me was disabilities. What struck me is that not all disabilities are visible. I'm talking about mental illness.

Growing up it seemed there was a pill for anything, whether you had a headache, a bruised arm or a cut on your finger. Yet if you felt like you didn't want to get out of bed or that you were in a 'funk' the remedy back then in our house was simply, "God will take care of that". When I was gay my mother at the time thought that gay was a sickness so she prayed hard for "God to take of that" so that I would be normal.

As the saying goes there are none so blind who refuses to see.

To get to a place of wellness, whether you have HIV or not, we have to recognize that we all suffer from some form of mental illness and although God does take of things, he also placed psychologists here for a reason. Growing up as a young gay black man I can only share my viewpoint. To me it seems that when it come to being treated for depression or any other mental health illnesses, we refuse to see a specialist. Especially when we know that we're not our usual self. But I'll admit when I fought my first bout of depression I was reluctant to go see a doctor because I didn't want a stranger knowing my business. Especially knowing that I was in the closet, I was scared they would tell someone. I also didn't want to take any pills. Not because of the Tuskegee experiment, of which a lot of my people use as their excuse, sometimes not even knowing what it was or how to spell it, my reluctance was the pills making me feel like a zombie. Trust me you only feel that way until your body adjust to them. The last reason is that I didn't want people to think that by seeing a psychologist it meant I was crazy. Or as we say "Coco for coconuts". I didn't want to be stigmatized.

But I took that chance because I wanted to be myself again and I wanted to not be stuck in the mud, my wheels turning and not going anywhere. I wanted to live. I wanted to face the fears that was holding me back. No matter what it took, I wanted to my life back!

Another misconception of a mental illness is that people feel if they talk to a psychologist it will go away or if they take a pill the problem will be solved. The truth is that it's two parts. The other parts is facing the demons in your past and finally burying them. Whether it was a previous child abuse; both physical and mental, neglect and for my brotha's and sista's, living in a racist country, fighting that daily battle wears your mental health down. Add sexuality and it's a perfect recipe for depression especially if you have no support system.

But again you have to be honest with yourself. You have to look in the mirror and strip yourself of

the clothes of self-doubt that society or family has placed on you to discover who you are. You're not on this earth alone. You may feel like it but trust me you're not. You have to put your gloves on and prepare to fight the good fight. Believe me the prize is so worthy! And yes through the years the feeling you thought were gone may reappear and it's just a sign you need a tune-up. We do it for our cars, our we not as worthy.

Worthy.

I fought my demons and by doing so I found my worth!

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