



Finding Light When Things Feel Heavy: A Gentle Reflection on Depression and Hope

Tom Duane candidly reflects on depression, resilience, and hope—why sharing the struggle, seeking help, and finding light still matter.

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I'm a pretty upbeat guy. Even as we as a nation face the continual onslaught of horrible news coming from the current presidential regime, I can usually find a way to be optimistic and hopeful. I'm not a pollyanna, but I mostly find the bright side of a situation. I truly believe that once Don the Con and his cronies are out of office and in prison, we will be able to restore our democratic republic, and even make it better and stronger than it was before.

But here's a confession, and one I'm loathe to admit. Around the holidays—and by the way, it had nothing to do with the holidays—I hit a wall. Depression got the better of me, and I was in a very dark place that lasted for days and days.

I've always been open about my mental health struggles, addictions, experiences in recovery, etcetera. There is no shame whatsoever in needing help. It's always been my belief that by telling my truth, perhaps someone else will relate and not feel so alone in their strife. We all experience mental health, and sometimes, just like with bodily health, professional care is needed to get back on track. Over my lifetime, I have been in several types of therapy, analysis, and self-help groups, so I know the value of these kinds of remedies.

By the way, last year I had one of my therapists die on me! Not while in a session with me, thankfully, but it was hard not to take their death personally.

Going back to my recent bout of depression, I realize now that I should have called my doctor and gotten some kind of treatment, medication, something to help me get out of this severe melancholy. Hindsight is 20/20. Truthfully, I didn't talk to anyone about how I was feeling until I was through it.

Sometimes when I'm in the middle of a deep depression, I can't see what I need. In those times, the rational part of my brain that would steer me to see my doctor is not functioning correctly, and I think I can handle it by myself, without the need to talk to anyone. My rational brain knows that isolating myself isn't good for me, but when my rational brain is ailing, my judgement is cloudy.

In advance of my next bout of hopelessness (because there will be another one, probably sooner than I'd like), I've instructed friends and colleagues to let me know if they notice a negative change in me, or a depression. I ask them to call me out and tell me to see a professional. I don't deserve to feel that badly for that long.

Another way that I am protecting my mental health is by limiting how much awful news and media I consume. I only let myself get worked up about two things: two horrible news items or events a day. And for every two awful things, I have to also find something to bring me joy. When there's so much that is dreadful happening, I have to find something that brings light. It can be as simple as getting a haircut or watching an episode of "The Great British Bake-Off" (who doesn't love that show?!).

Just as I didn't deserve to feel that badly for that long, you don't either. If you're feeling low and it's more than just seasonal blues, tell someone. Reach out to your medical provider to ask for help. Or even just talk to a friend. After all, there's truth in the old proverb, "A problem shared is a problem halved."

We have to take extra good care of ourselves and each other if we are going to succeed against the MAGA regime. We need 100% of you to fight against the terrible things that are happening in our country and world. And we need your light and energy to help build the stronger, more beautiful United States I know is in our future.