

Words can set you free

“Pain is real, but so is hope”



Mehak Dagar, MBBS Graduate, Himalayan institute of Medical Sciences, Utrakhand

The sound of the dispatcher's voice broke the piercing sound of her shallow breaths, "You are doing a good job," he said as she put the knife back in the kitchen. Ten minutes felt like forever and then paramedics finally came rushing in. 'I don't want to hurt you or anybody except myself', she said, tears rolling down her cheeks.

MINDS ARE UNIQUE. They malfunction in unique ways.

Depression is different to everyone. One of the key symptoms of depression is to see no hope.

The tunnel with the light at the end of it, it seems blocked.

And you're in it. Slowly suffocating!

Depression can make you think you are wrong. You walk around with struggling to breathe and no one can see that. To some, it's nothing, no big deal. And so, it is easy for stigma to survive. Stigma eats you alive because it affects your thoughts. And depression is a disease of thoughts.

You are so frightened to be called 'mad', you internalize everything. You agree to everything even if it makes you uncomfortable and choose to silence yourself.

It can affect anyone, from happily married couples to those without significant others, from people with luscious hair to those struggling with hair fall, from

billionaires to the homeless. Depression is an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the various parts of the brain, which control sleep, thinking, mood, as well as appetite.

You can't see depression; you can only feel it, only to not know what you're feeling. It is a mysterious entity, even to those who suffer from it. The smallest of the tasks seem insurmountable like paying a bill, doing the laundry, cooking meals. Sometimes just taking a shower feels like more than you can manage. You feel like the pain will never end.

'I am living a suffocating reality', she said to me once, before going to lie on the bed which she thought was her entire world. She wanted to die, she told me. I wish I could see the things going on in her

head but there was no way anyone could've seen the strange hell she was in, or why the idea of death seemed such a phenomenally good idea.

This wasn't a crazy thought.

This wasn't an after effect of smoking a hallucinogen.

It was an illness. It was pain. And she wanted to be free from it.

Happiness is not what she cared about, it was the fire in her mind that she wanted at ease.

All she wanted was to feel normal again.

It's not that she never said she'll try. She did millions of times. But they were the words I wanted to hear so she gave them to me and went back to her world of demons.

She was always tired and lost interest in almost everything. Painting was her favourite, but she hadn't picked up her

brush in months. She stopped meeting her friends and started to behave like a stranger to her family. She seemed to have a love-hate relationship with her bed. It was her space and she wanted it all to herself. She laid there for days with for eyes wide open staring into space, barely catching up on any sleep. Sometimes she cried out loud complaining of headache, other times she would say, *'everything hurts'*.

They said depression can be genetic but no one in her family had a mental illness. What caused her to feel this way is what I would seldom think? Was it an emotional trauma which I was unaware of, which resulted to a stressful situation, or was it some difficulty in relationships? Was there a financial issue or was it social isolation? I guess I'll never know, not until

she wants me to know.

'I'll always be here for you', I said with my eyes glazed with tears. She heard me. But did she believe me? I hoped for her to believe in me. How do you be there for a person who isn't sure if they want you?

You stick around irrespective. Know that they'll eventually turn up to you. They will say things which they don't mean, and you must overlook them. Don't take anything personally. None of this is your fault. Listen and be patient as it will be a long process and it won't be easy. Try to relieve any pressure you can. Most importantly, don't judge them. Staying in bed all day? Eating only junk? Not showering?

It's okay. It's always one step at a time. There were surely a few things that made her feel better and sometimes brought her spark back. Mindfulness. Sunrise. Sunsets. Long drives. Walks. Winter. Meditation.

Being around people she loved cooking. Ice-cream, Long baths, Star gazing, the smell of rain. They worked for her. Other things might work for you. Find what works for you and hold onto that.

Don't fight it. Accept things more. The trick is to befriend depression.

This is who you are. You are no less than a person who has cancer or a person who has been in an accident.

So, what should you do?

Just try.

Sometimes on the rocky road, what feels like failure can be a step forward.

Talk. Listen.

Don't let depression define you. It is not you. It is simply something that happened to you.

And talking helps. Talking is therapy.

Where talk exists, so does hope.

And give it time. Time always heals.

You will reach the light at the end of the tunnel.

So, here's to embracing the challenge to be honest. Saying "yes" to what serves you. Saying "no" to what doesn't. And avoiding the constant replay of "what if" I had answered differently.

Words, just sometimes, can set you free.

Depression is an internal war, an invisible fire, a black hole, a parallel universe. Depression is pain. But depression will always be smaller than you. Once all of it is over, you will barely remember how you made it through. You won't even be sure if it really is over. But one thing is certain. You will have evolved, you will have become stronger. That's what recovery is all about.

Be brave. Be strong. Breathe, and keep going. You will thank yourself later!

