

TURNING TOWARD —

Turning Toward Depression

*Bringing a Heartfelt Flashlight Into a Room Shaped
by the Dark*



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EXPERIENCED · RESEARCHED · OBSERVED

BEFORE WE BEGIN

If you are in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, you do not have to sit in the dark alone. In the U.S., call or text 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any hour of any day.

For help finding treatment and support, call SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 — free, confidential, and open 24/7.

This piece is one person's reflection. It is not therapy, and it is not a replacement for the care of a licensed professional. If something here resonates, let it point you toward help — not away from it.

*For the community healers of the Kansas City metro —
ReDiscover and NAMI Greater KC — who keep a light on
for families they've never met.*

I could go on for pages, and pages, here. But there are no words that describe the feeling that is the word, darkness. All throughout history, people have tried. Milton called it “darkness visible” — a strange thing to call a dark, a dark you can somehow see. Centuries later a man named William Styron borrowed that very phrase to title the plainest, truest little book we have on the subject, because he said the thing itself came close to being beyond describing. He wasn’t the first to give up and point instead of explain. Dante opened his whole descent by admitting he’d simply lost the path and found himself in a dark wood. The old mystics called it the dark night of the soul. The ancient physicians, long before any of them, blamed a black bile they were sure was pooling somewhere inside us — melancholia, they named it, the black thing. Everybody reaching. Nobody quite holding it.

And here I am, about to try anyway.

Here is my individualized attempt, including a few things I’ve noticed about the patterns people show when they’re going “through it”.

We all do. There is no lie in that, sooner or later life drains the color out of everything and leaves us to find our own way.

For some, it’s very easy. They have their methods, and I have mine. You have yours, and so on and so forth. It’s all different, but again, here’s my viewpoint on the subject, which again, does not substitute for the opinion of a doctor.

I have this little theory. It's based on a lot of things, but it's mostly based on me. It's also based on what I've read, and what I hear people talk about when they're depressed.

Most of the time, and when I say most, I'll be fair in admitting that even then is somewhere near half.

Most of the time, depression stems from past mistakes.

Not necessarily the mistakes themselves, but the outcome of those mistakes.

Most people suffering from depression, their thoughts are tied to their past mistakes, traumas, or the outcomes those mistakes/traumas are having on their life.

I need to make that clarification right now. Trauma, harm, inflicted on the ego, or inflicted from others who don't understand themselves, is not a mistake you've made. At all. That much, I can promise you.

Mistakes and traumas are two very different things. I suppose they can affect you in a very similar way, and in this same breath I suggest both shadows can be released. The methodology behind both is different, but the underlying outcome of depressive thought seems to match the same pattern.

Mistakes come in all shapes and sizes, to some people, they are children that later turn into blessings. Sometimes, they are the result

of our ego fighting through the world, and somehow always coming up short.

This is a thing we all go through, like I said above, for some, it's easy as waking up and going to Church. For others, it's a bit more complicated than that. For even more...well, I could go on forever here, so let's stick with the "basics" and my "theories" and "Philosophies". Final reminder, this is not medicine and I am not a doctor. I am only a person who considers failure as a way for oneself not to repeat its actions. Not only that, it also teaches others not to make the same mistakes.

We lose, we learn, we also teach, but we don't consider.

This statement can go many ways, but I'm going to take it two.

First of all, we never know what people are going through. We're not considerate to their "moment in time". Even the slightest agitation can come moments after an existential experience. We do not consider this. Therefore, it is important to be kind in everything we do.

For me, this becomes an avenue for "crushing" depression. When I approach people, asking them about their day before going on about mine, changes the dialogue. Oftentimes, I don't even have to talk about my day, because it isn't important to them.

That's perfectly okay, that's their decision to ask me.

The second way I wanted to take “consideration”, is the consideration of “why”.

Why are we sad? Oftentimes, we refuse to admit it, turn away from the demon explaining “I don’t know, sometimes it just is.”

Yes. It is. These are for reasons I can’t explain. That is what the professionals are for.

But for me, and a few others, there are reasons. We just ignore them. They sit at the top of the psyche, and seem so irrelevant we’re able to logically brush them off as nonsense.

Of course I’m not depressed because I couldn’t afford the phone bill.

Or am I?

We have to listen to what our brains are telling us, is my brain’s thoughts about it.

What type of ego has been developed, where the one and only trusted “I” is the one you’re willing to ignore?

Of course, some depression is chemical imbalance. For a very long time, this was unarguable. But these days, it isn’t quite. A team of researchers led by Joanna Moncrieff gathered up decades of the serotonin studies and looked at all of them together — about the strongest kind of look you can take — and came back saying there is no solid evidence tying low serotonin to depression at all. The “chemical imbalance” most of us grew up repeating was, it turns out,

sold to us nearly as hard as it was ever shown to us. So I'll ease up on my "of course." Some depression is surely chemical. But less of it than we were told, and maybe not in the way we were told.

But there is also a large amount of data supporting direct therapy as an alternate method, simply "talking it out." And I don't mean a little. When researchers set therapy against the pills, head to head, the gap in how much each one helps a depressed person comes out small — sometimes almost nothing. Put the two together and you often do better than either one alone. And here is the part that stays with me: the talking seems to hold longer. A year down the road, the people who did the work of talking tend to keep more of what they found. If a conversation can do the work a pill was supposed to do, then maybe the thing being mended was never only chemical.

This makes me think that the surface problems, were the problems, for me.

Oftentimes, even in the darkest days, it was because of regret or torment from the outcome of the decisions that caused regret. Even when looking towards the future, being chained to the past, is regret at its core.

At least for me it was.

One day started with the light bill, it wasn't even past due. I had two weeks to pay the damn thing, and for fourteen days straight I destroyed my body and mind over the simple thought of my lights getting shut off.

Somehow that was penance, in a sense. The money showed up, when it needed to. I claim no miracle other than dumb luck, no details discussed here. Just the obvious.

What I'm trying to say is, why do people worry so much about things they have no direct control over?

One that bothered me for a long time, is what other people thought of me.

That is literally the ego, telling the ego, it isn't....ego enough.

You can't control what people think, you can only control how you respond to it. A very wise man, told me this. Somebody I once rejected, who is now an important and inspiring individual in my life. He knows who he is, he was telling me this because I was being a jerk to his daughter. Somehow, he still knew exactly what to say, exactly when he needed to say it, so that I heard it, and it never left.

Every time after that, when my brain went to the place, I could literally read his words in my head about the situation.

As time went on, I got better at it, and before you know it, people started calling me arrogant because I didn't care what people thought. But my "equation" just cancels that out with them, I no longer care if people don't like me. They can tell me why, I'll just ask them why it matters. I know I'm kind when I need to be, that's all that matters to me.

Consider with me for a moment, if just being the light shining in the darkness was all a person needed. Consider the person you hate the most, and consider you told them something constructive instead of hurtful.

In my theory?

That's all it takes.

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SERIES

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