

Depression Is A Dirty Word

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How depression can ruin a life.

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I stand on the top of the building where I work watching the congested traffic trying to make its way out of the city after a long hard day's work. It's Friday, and it seems the entire city has decided to leave at 4pm to get an early start to the weekend. Horns blast and angry voices yell out the open car windows as some try to get that one car further ahead than the others. At the next set of lights the flashing blue and red lights of the police car signal an accident, which is the cause of the congestion. I light up a cigarette, lean against the wall and look down into the street five stories below. I think how easy it would be to climb onto the wall and jump. I wonder if in that split second between impact and death, if I'd register the pain, but then knowing my luck I wouldn't die. I doubt I'd ever do it, but depression makes me wonder about things like that. Depression is a dirty word. I never tell people I have it because they look at me strangely, and treat me differently. I've always felt at nineteen I was too young to suffer from such a debilitating disease. There are days I don't even want to get out of bed. I just want to lay there in the warmth of my blanket and forget about the outside world, but I never do. I always get up and struggle through another day, trapped in a world I don't feel a part of anymore. I look down at my cigarette and notice it's burnt down to the filter without my even taking a puff. I throw it into the large concrete ashtray next to me. 'Lilly?' I jump and turn to find Brad moving across the rooftop towards me. He's a good looking man; tall, with blonde hair and green eyes, and he has more than a vague resemblance to a young Richard Dean Anderson. It makes him the most popular mail delivery guy in our building. 'What are you doing up here?' I ask. 'Some of us are going to the pub. You want to come?' I feel as if my heart is going to leap out of my chest with a mixture of excitement and dread at being asked to join them. I've worked here for a month, but have never felt part of the group. I have lunch by myself, I don't join in the conversations going on around me because my social skills aren't very good. I've been isolated since I was sixteen, afraid to leave the house. I hate depression. It makes me so irrational. My mother pushed me into getting this job. She said it was time I went back out into the world. I know she's right, but I'm scared of what's out there. I

tuck my long brown hair behind my ear with a shaking hand and look at the ground at my feet. I keep telling myself he's not going to hurt me. 'Oh, thanks, but I can't. I have to get going.' 'Come on, just one drink,' he insists, in his usual happy-go-luck attitude. I'm confused by his insistence and I can't get the words in my mind straight. Before I realise what I'm doing I say, 'Really I can't. I have to pick up my daughter.' My excitement gives way to panic at my unguarded words. I look up to see a look of surprise on his face and know it's too late to try and think of something to cover my error. 'I didn't know you had a daughter.' 'Yes,' I murmur. My heart feels as if someone has just driven an ice pick threw it. 'How old is she?' 'Three.' 'Wow, you were young when you had her.' 'I have to go.' I hurry past him towards the stairwell without looking back. 'If you change your mind, we'll be at Monty's,' he calls after me. How could I have been so stupid as to let that slip. I know he's going to tell the others, and they'll ask questions I don't want to answer. How can I tell them my daughter was the result of rape when I was sixteen, that when I look at her I'm reminded of what happened. The stairs blur, and hot tears fall down my cheeks. I let out a small sob that echoes around me in the stairwell scaring me. I'm such a bad mother because I can't love my daughter the way she should be. Sometimes I can't even bare her near me. But it's not her fault; she didn't ask to be born. She didn't ask for me to be violated by my friend's father, a man I'd trusted, a man I'd known for so long. I burst through a door and find myself in the street, breathing deeply, and grasping the stitch in my side caused by my head long flight down the stairs. The people on the crowded sidewalk hurry past me. I can see in their eyes they don't want to know if there's a problem. They don't want their Friday night complicated or ruined by a hysterical woman. The traffic is flowing smoother now and before I can think of what I'm doing, I run into the street. In that split second between impact and death, I feel the pain.