

Marked

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There is something about depression that rips away your cognitive thinking, that convinces you that you are simultaneously the only person suffering and a speck in an ocean with no worth whatsoever. There was a commercial that used to be on TV, one of the ones convincing you that their drugs are better than the other companies, and my sister and I used to make fun of it whenever it came on. It was overly dramatic and gray, and featured a woman sitting in a sad, lonely kitchen while a voice asked “Where does depression hurt?”

The answer, of course, was everywhere. It sinks into your skin and settles into joints and buries itself like a barb into every nook and cranny, so even on your best day it is there in the back of your mind reminding you that you are not well. Sometimes, it’s a physical pain. Sometimes it’s an exhaustion so severe that you can do nothing but lay in bed and sleep for hours on end, or lay in the dark and stare at the wall because even sleep seems an impossibility. Sometimes it’s a hollow feeling inside your chest, like your organs have been removed and replaced by something that squirms and grows and leaves you feeling like there is nothing else inside you except the depression.

I used to convince myself that I would not make it until thirty. That I would be dead, irrelevant, mostly forgotten except on the day I had died when Facebook would remind the people who had not culled my inactive profile from their friend’s list that I had died, and they would leave a small, sad message that no one would read except, perhaps, my family. I am twenty-seven now, two and a half years away from thirty, away from that arbitrary marker that I set out nearly ten years ago, when I was at my lowest point. I firmly believe I will make it.

That doesn't mean I'm not still sick. It doesn't mean there aren't days where I am so filled with ennui that the only solution is to play video games until I am numb and my eyes burn, because the idea of setting it down and concentrating on anything else is an impossibility. It doesn't mean I don't miss class because I can't drag myself out of bed, because the anxiety of being a good seven years older than my classmates doesn't overcome me in an awful, cloying way. I am still sick, but I am better than I was even four years ago.

Depression defined me as a teenager. It has affected the way I see my body and my mind, has convinced me that I am lacking worth, has made marks that I am still struggling to deal with as an adult. When my grandmother died, a woman told my mother that for the first two weeks, she would think of my grandmother constantly. And then a day would go by, and then two, and then four, before weeks were passing where she didn't think about the death. The pain when she did think of my grandmother was as awful as it was when she first died, but it was less frequent. My depression is the same way. I am healing, albeit slowly, but there is nothing better than realizing I have gone a month in relative happiness.

I think I may always be sick, that growing up this way has left an indelible mark on me. That even if the time comes where I am healed, my personality and my life and my career have been affected by depression. Depression is not something to be worn like a crown; I look at the scars on my wrist and don't see a reason for them to exist. I was a fucked up and sad teenager, a mournful young adult, and now I am fixing myself. There is no glorification to be found in a disease that forced me to drop out of university as a seventeen year old, that set my life back by ten years. Depression gave me some of my worst traits – envy, frustration, insecurity – and gave me nearly nothing in return.

I am mentally ill, but I'm on the up and up. It's all I can hope for and all I can do.

