



# You Are Not Alone

by Angela D. Glascock, Editorial Writer

**March 2021.** I hadn't been depressed like this in a long time. Years. Decades. Since my sister died by suicide in 1996. Back then, I had the comfort of wrapping myself in rage. Sometimes the anger was so loud it drowned out the constant din of depression — for a while, anyway. Sometimes. It was bad back then. The worst. But I was able to function. I also had way fewer responsibilities.

This one now, though. I think I'm feeling better. I mean, I do feel better, but you never know with depression. It's only been a few days.

In these past months, there have been times when all I could do was cry. Usually in the shower where I had privacy and the kids couldn't hear me. On really bad days I was unable to get out of bed, and I swear there were whole days when I didn't brush my teeth. I lost all interest in eating. Sometimes I would lay in bed during the day, staring at the ceiling with its barely visible glow in-the-dark stars and the tapestry of a starry night framed by trees. I would stare and stare and try to make myself move, but I couldn't. I napped — but really, I was just staring and wondering when it would end, if there was any relief to be had, if my family could see or sense my struggle. I didn't want them to.

I still had to go places. This meant going out with dirty, tangled hair, the same pants for days, same bra, maybe a different shirt, maybe the one I slept in (I did wash important areas and I changed my undies). I just didn't care. I had no energy.

The insomnia didn't help. I admitted to myself that I wasn't just a bad sleeper as I've said for years but had insomnia, which is a scary word for me. I could fall asleep for a couple or a few hours, but then I'd wake up in the night. Still no energy, but my stupid brain wouldn't let me sleep. Hoping to doze off soon, I'd read or listen to a book, sometimes do some online grocery shopping, and a few times some Amazon shopping. Forgotten Amazon purchases would arrive days later, and I had no idea what I'd ordered in the wee hours. Sleep would return between 4:30 and 6 a.m.

At first, I was able to manage the depression. True, I didn't do as much as I could. The laundry could wait. And it did, till I was down to my last pair of undies. Email could wait. Dogs didn't need to go on a walk; they have that big back yard. The kids could go without milk for a day. I'd clean my bathroom later. Just wipe down the sink and toilet for now. The thought of changing the bed sheets exhausted me.

On one of those fatigued afternoons, I had a regular check-in scheduled with my psychiatrist, a virtual meeting. I didn't want to do it at home because I suspected there would be crying. So, I drove over to my parents' house thinking I could sit in their driveway and connect to their WiFi.

I cried. My doctor said falling asleep then waking was from anxiety. She prescribed something for insomnia that was also an antidepressant and would help with anxiety. As our virtual meeting ended, my dad pulled into the driveway. I put on my mask and climbed out of my car. It was weird that I was just sitting in their driveway (my mom wasn't home, either), so I tried to explain that I had a virtual appointment and then just started sobbing. I pressed my face into his chest and sobbed. I knew I had to say the kids were okay because that's the first thing his mind would go to. I hadn't really hugged my dad in more than a year, and certainly not for more than a second. He'd had both his vaccinations, so I indulged in the heavy, unsure pats of his big mechanic's hands and the soap-smell of his shirt.

"I'm so tired." I sobbed, my voice high and muffled.

“You can come inside and take a nap,” he said.

A smile broke through the storm clouds and downpour on my face. “Thank you. I have to go home. But thank you.”

I dragged myself to the pharmacy to pick up the new prescription. The pharmacist asked if I wanted automatic refills.

“I’ll wait. I don’t even know if it will work,” I said.

It worked. Finally, I slept. I dreamt. It had been years since I’d remembered my dreams. Now I wasn’t as tired and grouchy, but I was still depressed. Still no energy.

Sleep wasn’t the magic cure for my depression, and it was the rare night I didn’t wake at 12:30 a.m. and then 2 a.m., but I could fall back asleep soon after waking. It felt lovely. Some days were better than others. On the better days — and when I say “better,” I mean I had a wee bit of motivation; I still felt wretched — I managed to clean, paint and rewire two thrift store floor lamps. I washed my clothes. I changed our sheets. I had a migraine. It came almost as a relief. I had a reason to lie in bed all day, even if my head pounded and I dry heaved. It had the potential to be worth the pain. But no. I still had things I had to do. When I moved, the migraine pain would return. My husband took care of some of the things I’d normally do, like dinner and shuttling children, but rest properly. My family did what they could to help. Older kid brought me tea. Younger kid checked on me to see how I was feeling. Husband brought dinner and a cold washcloth.

After the migraine petered out, I had a couple of much better days. I can’t remember if I took the insomnia meds the night I woke up at 2 a.m. and said, “ugh, fine,” got out of bed, dressed, and went to the garage to clean and sand the little thrift shop cabinet for my husband to store his records in.

At one point during the lamp and cabinet projects, he said something like, “This is great, but wouldn’t it be easier to just buy this new, so you don’t have to work so hard?” Sure it would, but I was inspired by the possibility of a project on one of the better days I had.

On not-as-bad days I cleaned the fridge. Took proper care of my teeth. Changed clothes. Decided to declutter my office. It’s a work in progress.

While I’m still down at times, it doesn’t feel nearly as bad. I can enjoy music. I can go for a walk. I can write. I can talk to my friends.

I’m probably not quite out of the deep, dark corridors, but I feel I’m getting closer to the exit, closer to the sunshine. For now.

**July 2022.** I’m so much better now. I know we all had a rough time at the beginning and worst of the pandemic. As you know, our resources were/are limited. The pandemic didn’t cause my depression, but it didn’t make it any easier to navigate.

I’m sharing this because I want people to know they are not alone in feeling “crap-tastic” and that it gets better.

Here are a few resources to explore:

- <https://www.nami.org>
- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>
- In crisis? Call or text 988, the new three-digit dialing code to connect to the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline\*
- Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860. Trans Lifeline is a trans-led organization that connects trans people to the community support and resources they need to survive and thrive.
- The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline: 1-888- 843-4564
- The GLBT National Youth Talkline (youth serving youth through age 25): 1-800-246-7743

The last two provide telephone, online private one-to-one chat and email peer-support, as well as factual information and local resources for cities and towns across the United States.

\*Effective July 17, 2022, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created a new 3-digit dialing code that will connect callers to the nationwide suicide prevention hotline for mental health crises. Just like we're trained from childhood to call 911 for immediate assistance with fire, health or safety emergencies, now 988 is designed to be a resource for immediate mental health emergencies, people at risk of suicide and other crises.

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