

Opening Our Eyes:
Where are you? I know
by Nan Dickie

Let's say the population of Salmon Arm hovers around 18,000. That's pretty accurate. Say 15% of us are experiencing an episode of depression at any one time. This is a very low estimate. So approximately 2,700 people in our community are experiencing this particular mental pain right now. That's a lot of folks. Now, at least 60% of people who are depressed don't seek help. It is most likely much higher than that. That means that in our community there are at least 1,600 folks who are struggling with depression without help - without medical help, without psychological help, without the support of others who are depressed. I would only hope that most of these individuals have some personal support, but many people don't.

I'm wondering where you are, you more than 1,600 depressed people not receiving medical, psychological, or peer support care?

Let me guess.

- You may be working as well as you are able in a full-time job, your brain is not working properly, and your work is suffering.
- You may be on sick-leave from that job because you couldn't fulfill your responsibilities there.
- You may be between jobs, because there's no way you could work feeling as you do now.
- You may be at home, because you feel ashamed that you can't work now, and money is starting to run short.
- You may not need to work, but feel useless because you don't have the energy to do anything.
- You may be taking training or going to school or college, not able to keep up with your assignments.
- You may be an at-home parent who feels isolated, but you don't know why.

How am I doing so far? Have I left anyone out?

I am able to guess where you are, because I have been in each of these places, except the last one. (I didn't have children because of the severity of my chronic illness of clinical depression.) I didn't receive any treatment for my depression for more years than I care to acknowledge. For years I hid in all those places I listed above. I hid because I felt like a failure, unworthy, not good enough; my self-esteem was zero; my brain felt like mush. No wonder I hid.

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When did I stop hiding? When it all fell apart, and I had to go to the hospital. With help, I reconstructed myself, putting the broken pieces together in a new, healthy way. This was a very big job.

Now, where are YOU, if you are one of the 1,600 persons not receiving any care for your depression? You may well be where I used to be, in hiding. That's understandable. But you don't have to stay there. We other 1,100 individuals didn't.

[Nan Dickie is facilitator of the depression support group (DSG) in Salmon Arm. DSG meetings are held the first and third Mondays at Askews Uptown conference room at noon. Everyone welcome to this safe, caring group. Info: ndickie@telus.net; 250 832-3733.]