

21st January 2024

Depression

“I think you ought to know I’m feeling very depressed.”

Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy (Marvin, the paranoid Android)*

In 2000, the author, J K Rowling, gave an interview to Ann Treneman which was published in *The Times*, in which she said:

Depression is the most unpleasant thing I have ever experienced ... It is that absence of being able to envisage that you will ever be cheerful again. The absence of hope. That very deadened feeling, which is so very different from feeling sad. Sad hurts, but it's a healthy feeling. It's a necessary thing to feel. Depression is very different.

Thankfully, there are more celebrities than ever before who’re prepared to talk about depression and encourage others to do the same. Before causes of clinical depression are explored, it’s vital that an environment is created in which people can talk about their depressive feelings and have them appropriately acknowledged.

In the hospice, an elderly patient was admitted with her hands swathed in bandages. She’d attempted to slit her wrists. When I met her, she said, “You’ll want nothing to do with me,” but, in time, told me what had happened and why. I suggested what she’d done was a natural response to her circumstances. She was surprised. “You’re not supposed to say that.” “What should I say, then?” I asked. “You’re supposed to say I’m bad. I did a sinful thing. God will hate me, and you do too.” I told her I took a different view. “You matter,” I said. “I won’t judge or condemn. I’ll give you time to talk about how you feel.” It was the beginning of healing.

In the Bible’s first book of Kings, the prophet, Elijah, is depressed. He goes into the desert and hides under a broom bush. In his anguish, he prays that he’ll die. But his God, in the form of an angel, doesn’t rebuke or revile this man in his depression. Instead, God feeds him – and God waits. God feeds him again – and God waits. God talks with Elijah – and God waits, and waits, and waits, until Elijah is ready to move on.

If you know what depression is like, I hope you’ve found people who give you the time to talk, and who’ll wait with you for however long it takes. And if you know someone who is depressed today, are you prepared to wait with them and listen, when that’s what they need the most?

A prayer for today

Wait with me, patient God. Feed me and stay till I’m ready. It may be a while. Amen

An original reflection © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>