

## Gray Sorrow: Depression in Prison

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To truly explain the depression one experiences while in prison is difficult. It's like a sadness so deep within that it can never be lifted; a heart of heaviness which mere words cannot express. It becomes an exercise in futility to seek a promise land when you're cut off from society, taken away from your family, separated from your friends, co-workers, peers, and isolated by yourself. There's an underlying feeling that the illogical pursuit of happiness is unavailing, and just waking up everyday becomes a struggle. You are surrounded by rue and stamped into the darkness of shame and hopelessness, and there is a gray sorrow following everywhere; hammered and forged on an anvil of regret. Most times, it feels fruitless to search oneself for some future endeavor of consequence (for the hour has passed and the candlelight's dim) so we grieve for our last hope once again. It is hard to continue on....

Depression (a major affective disorder that affects almost all men in prison at one point or another) causes anxiety, lethargy, obesity, vapidity, and feelings of loneliness. Every second of every minute of everyday becomes torment in the abyss. We sit here alone and ponder our mistakes – knowing that we can never turn back time or change our fate, and not fully believing that we have the power to control our future and lead life to a better place. The grueling nature of suffering bears its teeth and takes a bite out of the present moment regularly, reminding us of the constant battle to try and stay in one piece. Things drag on as the world outside spins and spins and spins while we stand still.

The emotional disturbance in our minds can be temporarily abated by positive activities like exercise, reading, chess, yoga, puzzles, correspondence, meditation, writing, music, and other things to take your thoughts away from prison, but at the end of the day we remain in a world of hurt and confusion; at the mercy of our oppressor's whip and the bars of the cell door. There is nowhere to run from this agonizing pain. The discontentment which arises from our previous poor decisions can follow you for years, and the physiology of the disease of depression weighs on top of that like an elephant, adding to the moroseness.

There is no real cure for depression as of yet, only pharmacological assistance to help keep symptoms at bay, but medicine and therapy are only an option if you want to be classified as a *psychiatric inmate* and be transferred to a facility which accommodates those with much worse problems than depression – homicidal/suicidal tendencies, schizophrenia, mental retardation, and more. Ultimately, it is up to each of us to find a rope that we can pull ourselves up out of the pit with - by any means necessary. It comes down to strength, warrior-spirit, tenacity, positivism, right outlook, and most of all, hope...things that are sometimes, but not always, out of reach while serving time in the Department of Corrections.