



All the Lonely People

They are among us, but who ever sees them?

Year end is approaching. Festivities are being planned. Children are excited by the hustle-bustle, the decorations and bright lights in shops and streets. Adults too are swept away with the euphoria. It is a time of goodwill; of thinking kind thoughts; of appreciating a life which is sometimes hard, but usually turns out okay in the long run. Yet, while we indulge ourselves in the cosiness and anticipation of the moment, there are some among us who are crying. We fail to hear because we prefer not to listen; we refuse to see because it might make us sad; because this is supposed to be a time of happiness. And if we turn our backs on them, it still can be; for us, anyway.

Not for them, though; not for the lonely people. Happiness has faded and become a distant memory; a whisper so far in their misty past that it might never have been. They recall the essence, though. We are waving it in their faces - with our jollity and laughter. They are desperate to join in, to laugh with us; but as they try their tears break out and flow unabated. These unfortunate souls have lost the joy of life and the will to live it.

Certainly there are problems and we all have to face them, but we do it and move on. Could it be, however, that we are not as sensitive, not as caring, perhaps are so involved with the practicalities of life itself that we dismiss those small, important elements that continue to make it worth living? Try to imagine how it must be for them. Once they had friends, parents, brothers and sisters; now they are surrounded by vague shadows they used to know which have become unrecognisable. They were led to believe that life would be blessed with promise. Seemingly overnight they find themselves cursed, on the brink of a future that holds only the prospect of a bleak and endless winter. How would we feel in that situation?

Well, we'd pull ourselves up by our boot-straps and rise above the adversities; of course we would! But the problem is a darkness which contorts perspective and reason. It consumes, is all-encompassing, blinding; and it seems eternal. Alright then, we would step back to shed some light on our options. The only dim glow we can manage to cast fails to penetrate; and if we reach out into the blackness, there is nothing to feel except an ambience that is chill and dank. At this moment reality is invisible, untouchable. It simply doesn't exist. What now? Okay: let's think positively – there has to be a logical way out of this predicament. There just has to be...

This is not the way the lonely people think. They are at their wit's end. For them, the only identifiable solution is oblivion – no more pain, no anything.

I am talking about suicide, and I make no apologies for that. Arguably, it is not a subject that should be even hinted at on a website promoting happiness. It is upsetting, yes; but it happens – in our world, in our neighbourhoods, in our homes. We haven't noticed because those at risk have become reclusive and prefer not to admit how they are feeling, perhaps have felt for a long while. They could be work colleagues, friends of our children, our own sons and daughters, our siblings; even a partner. Believing we are close doesn't make it so. The lonely people have no family, no friends; not anymore.

It is possible the ones they loved and associated with are unwittingly responsible for their desolation by simply being happy and able to meet life's challenges. Perhaps it started out this way: at first being a little irritated because they weren't coping as well as everyone else seemed to be; then envious for the same reason; which led to resentment and eventually hatred. An illogical reaction, maybe, but by this time logic is just another word in the vocabulary of a normal person which they are convinced they have ceased to be.

Was this feeling of despondency born of a single event, or an accumulation of unhappy occurrences? They might benefit if they could review when and how it began to grow; but by the time the torment is approaching the brink of unbearable, the door to the past has closed. There are no answers to be found in here and now; except for one. To us, such a drastic solution is unthinkable, immoral; for them it is the only release that makes sense.

We shouldn't blame or criticise because we aren't one of them. To insist we know what they are going through is an arrogant misconception of a mental condition we will hopefully never have to deal with. Even trying to understand the pressures they have to contend with is an impossibility unless we are one of them. All we can do is be aware of those at risk. When someone we know seems to be struggling with life, especially on a psychological level, a friendly word or two might encourage them to open up and talk about their problems. From this small beginning, there may be something else we can do, perhaps by offering a practical solution to guide them out of the dismal tunnel from which they have begun to see life.

If you have read this far, I thank you. I would like to believe it is because you care; and that's what A Season of Happiness is all about. We try to help people in small ways, and I would ask you to come on board and do the same. A little compassion can make a big difference and goes a long way. People who can be saved from taking their own lives will not only be examples, but they can also identify with others who are contemplating suicide. I have no doubt they will wish to help, to coax, to re-assure. Their reason would seem to be obvious – they have stood on the edge of despair, they know from personal experience how terrifying it is; and if they can convince someone going through what they did to turn around and see that the future is still worth embracing, then they will have re-discovered that the meaning of life is simply in the living.

For more information on the precursors of potential suicide:
see our article on Depression Focus 17

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