

THE POSSE

The Lone Ranger did not ride alone. His faithful companion, Tonto, was always there to support him in his quest for law and order.

Those of us who saw the old western movies in our childhood remember that their stories of law against outlaws culminated in a community effort. The community effort was a “posse.” The posse was a group of citizens on horseback joining the hero in pursuit of the “bad-man”.

As the posse engaged in the chase one horse and rider would be in the lead, then another, and another. Eventually the hero in the white hat would take the lead, catch the outlaw, and they would tumble off their horses and down a hillside. The posse would surround the victim and he was caught.

Depression never rides alone. Manic depression (bipolar) never rides alone. They are always accompanied by a posse of devastating conditions pursuing me and my kind with the potential for destroying our lives.

Depression is the representative word when our condition is spoken of. Accompanying conditions, the “posse”, includes emotional detachment; isolation; loneliness; panic (without cause); high anxiety (without cause); paralysis; threat to employment; lack of resilience; shame; guilt; morbid sadness; hopelessness; anger; paralyzing fear (without cause); great personal loss; disruption of family life; withdrawal of friends; sense of worthlessness; mental and emotional demand for altered behavior; bewilderment (what is happening to me?); emotional and physical pain; sleep disruption; financial calamities; appetite change; loss of capacity for joy, laughter, enjoyment; emotional fatigue (from coping with the above); thoughts of suicide; real preference for death; and some etceteras.

In the deepest state of depression one may experience some of these or all of them. In either case they alter our lives to the extent that our experience of life in this world is not even similar to that of people with a normal experience. We are truly in another world while being in the same environment.

These conditions (the posse) originate from within us, influenced by things going on outside of us. They are all conditions that can be dealt with

and returned to a healthy or healthier state. Recent advances in knowledge about “depression” has resulted in new medications, therapies, and other nurturing factors which assure that we can all feel better.

Regretfully, the major enemy to “depression” is not treatable. The most relentless rider in this deadly posse is stigma. Our fear of the opinions and actions of those who do not have the condition are so threatening to us that we will not acknowledge our condition.

Going for help could possibly result in our secret being known. Consequently most people who have an emotional disorder choose to suffer it and often die with it rather than be helped. Only thirty percent of those who suffer these conditions ever seek help. Our dread of the stigma causes those of us who do receive help to postpone until our condition reaches crisis level, and someone else seeks out the help for us -- while we resist.

This is the twenty first century in terms of the potential for our improvement. Yet, it remains the eighteenth century in terms of public understanding and the reaction of those around us. Therefore most of us (depression victims) must continue to live as if we are in the eighteenth century -- the torture goes on inside of us as a result of the persecution from outside of us.

As a lifetime sufferer who has been through it all and finally arrived at a better place, I assure all of my fellow sufferers that the reward is worth taking the abuse and making the effort.

To all good people who stand in our way because of misinformation and unfounded attitudes, there is also a good word. Life will become richer as your growing knowledge and understanding results in you having more acceptance of fellow human beings. It is worth the effort.