

# Robin Williams' Battle with Depression

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This is the title most media outlets are using when reporting on the recent suicide of Robin Williams. It sounds much nicer than "Robin Williams Kills Himself". But, this is the raw reality of what happened. Robin Williams it appears struggled with/was diagnosed with/had/was born with, whatever terminology you want to use, depression. As a result, he decided he didn't want it anymore, so he took matters in his own hand and fell victim to the lies that depression tells you. In light of this public figure who many of us grew up watching on *Mork and Mindy*, loved in *Good Will Hunting*, and will never forget in *Dead Poet's Society*, I wanted to highlight some things about depression and those effected by it.

- 1. Not all people who are depressed are suicidal.** A large majority of people who consider themselves depressed never think about harming themselves or dying. Depression can be put on a spectrum from mild to severe. If you have someone close who states they are depressed talk openly about what that looks like for them, and ask questions.
- 2. Being unhappy or sad is not the same as depression.** Depression is ugly. It affects you mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is a weight and a void all at the same time. It distorts reality and it lies. Depression wants people to believe there is no hope, no way out, no win - win. Depression is there regardless of circumstances, financial status, marital status, and spiritual status. Depression sneaks in and robs you sometimes before you know what has happened.
- 3. Praying harder, reading more scripture, and doing more church is not the answer.** Depression is not just for those who don't know Christ. Depression is not selective based on spiritual status or denomination. It does not care about race, gender, or age. Depression does not come on only because we are spiritually dry or out of God's will, there are many causes and reasons for depression. These causes and reasons are too many to address here, but if someone you care about struggles in this way a good honest conversation can shed some light on their particular journey, causes, treatment, and ongoing work.
- 4. Someone who says he is struggling is really just having a bad day.** In a world where we throw the phrase "I'm depressed" around almost as easily as "I'm happy", it can lose it's meaning. If someone who is struggling with depression is to the point of saying they are struggling, then they have probably been struggling for a while and it wasn't their first bad day. Pay attention to your friends. If one of your friends who struggle in this way reaches out through email or text or phone call or whatever means and tells you they are having a hard time - take it seriously. Ask them what they need, ask them "Are you going to hurt yourself?", ask them what they would like for you to do. They need to know that you hear them and you care.
- 5. They won't really kill themselves.** This is the biggest myth of all. Thousands of people do it each year and thousands more attempt and fail (which is an entirely new set of issues). People get tired of depression, people get tired of feeling like everyone is happy but them, people get weary in the fight. You see the lies of depression tell you - your better off dead - no one really cares - no one will notice - aren't you tired of feeling this way? - you can end it. And those struggling give into those lies. The voice of depression speaks louder than the voice of truth in those moments.

So, it is really sad that Robin Williams gave in. It is sad that others also did on that day but we don't know their names or struggles. One good result I want to come out of this *very public death* is seriousness about depression and suicide. I want us to understand it is real, it is a fight, and sometimes the people we love are going to get weary in the fight. These people need our help and support to keep going. Support can look different for different people, and wisdom and discernment must be used. Seek counsel to know how best to provide the support they need and include your friend in the process.

If you would like a good resource on depression please check out Ed Welch's book [Depression: A Stubborn Darkness](#).

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