



## Being There for Another

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### Opinion

Walking into the church, the same as we did every Sunday, there was a slight tension among my parents. Heading straight to our usual bench, with teeth marks embedded from those hard years of our childhood, we silently sit down. “Welcome to church this fine morning”, Bishop Pippin joyfully proclaimed at the front of the chapel as the clock barley reached 9 o'clock on the dot. The beginning of the new school year was approaching very quickly. The summer sun was still peeking through the curtains, shinning its rays on the choir chairs that lined the front of the church. I glanced down the row to see my parents avoiding eye contact, and the space between each one of us seemed to go on forever. I turned and watched the Bishop, not wanting to be caught staring.

My brothers came and rejoined me after they passed the sacrament, also wanting to avoid the situation down the row. Unknown to us at the time, this would become a usual circumstance for the next year. As the first talk was coming to an end, my dad stands up and walks out. My heart dropped. What was happening?

My first thought was divorce. I could not see that happening. They loved each other, they never argued, and they loved us. What really was going is what changed my life and my family. My dad had depression and anxiety, and it was getting bad. He did not feel worthy to be at church, to be a father to us, and could not handle work and home very well. This caused a lot of pain in my family, especially for my mother and me.

As we pushed through and learned from this trail, we grew closer as a family and learned how to help other family members that struggled. I learned to not judge my father for his trials, to find love for him, and not to tell him to do more, even when it seems impossible at times.

### Thou Shalt Not Judge

There is one girl, sitting across the room. When I look at her, all I can see is the problems that I have seen her face. She has a bi-polar disability that makes her be completely unlike the people that are desirable for hanging out. Amanda expresses her side of the story, to where once she learned of this girl having depression and a disability that was out of her control, she didn't want anything to do with her. She assumed that there was not going to be anything worth being part of that relationship.

As Amanda was growing up, there was a friend that she had that was always more of a rebel. She was the first to have her first kiss at the young age of 15, and then through high school years started to have depression and developed bi-polarize. Amanda stopped hanging out with her, because she was unable to accept her actions that were not under her control.

Judgement is part of being human. Looking at people in their hardest times and amongst their most trying times is the hardest time for the people on the outside to not judge them. When my dad's problems began, I couldn't understand why he was choosing to be this way. I thought that he was being more dramatic than what was really happening.

After finally graduating high school, I began to attend the YSA ward in my area. Since I was in a different ward then my family, then I would go to church before so therefore come home earlier. When I would return home most Sundays, I would run into my father. He would go to sacrament, and then come home and get some work done. The first time that I returned home, I awkwardly avoided any interaction besides a hello. As this would happen weekly then it became too uncomfortable, after all he was still my father. I began to see that he was not as bad as I was making him out to be. When I would get home from church, I would sit down on the couch next to him and talk about my life and made sure he stayed involved in my life as much as possible.

### Genuine Love

Having depression and anxiety was hard by itself. As TJ was experiencing it, he began to feel

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isolated and alone as nobody was ever there to help. His biggest problem was being a perfectionist. Sitting at a desk in his class workshop, seeing his first project in front of him, unsmooth, the corners weren't the exact angle that he wanted, and the color was not exactly what he wanted and expected it to be. During class he would fall behind, and he would give out silent pleas for help, but still wanting to accomplish this on his own. Nobody saw what he was going through and tried to help him. He was stuck there with no hope; he could not feel love and support, for nobody knew what he was feeling on the inside.

From a young age, TJ had wanted everything to be perfect from his attitude, to his grades, to small after projects. As he grew older and became involved in a major where he was designing and creating different products with his own creativity, there became a struggle over doing his best in his classes and being able to have the perfect ideas. As he began to have feelings of depression, he did not want other people to find out in fear that they would not see him the same they use to. He needed someone to love him through this all.

Everybody has trials to experience. As I began to want my relationship back and find a way to love him, I had to learn to find genuine love for him. It became clear, as I thought a lot about it, which as there was more to the situation than his choice to just choose against what I believed to be the right choice. Even I have my own struggles that I would hope someone would look at me and want to still love me. People don't need pity love, but we are able to tell when it is genuine and sincere vs. pitied and forced.

Being part of the marching band has started to take a toll and gave him something to distract his mind from other problems. As the football game was in progress, TJ was in the stands with his section, feeling lonely. The day had been particularly difficult. One of the section members turned to him and asked if he was doing alright, it felt sincere, not to be annoying but it was obvious that he really cared. It gave TJ an opportunity to open to others and get small help that he needed. He felt that he cared. The importance of asking someone if they are okay is that it is asked with love.

### **Invite, Don't Pressure To Do More**

"Maybe you should find an activity to distract your stress, or maybe even try to focus on your scripture reading"

"I get it I should do this! But I have many other things to be doing and I don't have the time anymore", was the response of TJ, who was over stressed already.

That following night, homework piled up. The final hours of the night seemed to be flying past, as the homework pile remained the same. There was no time to take a break. There was no hope in finishing everything in time.

He began to think about the other people he knew, they probably were able to sleep tonight, they also probably got the chance to read their scriptures. Everybody was getting the chance to do the things that they needed to do, but he focused all of his time and energy on perfecting his homework assignment.

Learning from different people that have depression and from seeing others go through this, there has been a trend where there is never a good response to people when they are told what to fix. When I have tried to give people advice like, go to church more, do something to relax, or focus on the good things in your life, there is

never a good response. I learned that it is more important to invite them to participate and be with them.

The definition of depression is the severe feeling of sadness, without hope or courage. When someone is in this state, healthier decisions become harder to make. When someone is being told that they need to be fixing their problems, there becomes a heightened level of discouragement. They know that they need to improve. Instead of telling people what to fix, give them the opportunity to fix what they need help with. Invite them to go to the gym with you, go on a hike, participate in group plans, and other activities that bring the person to a feeling of relaxed and calm.

Sunday afternoons always consisted of Sunday naps, calling family, and just family time. As we are together at this time, it became apparent to me that my dad had a look of distraught across his face. Wanting to help him, we would suggest activities for him to do.

"Maybe you should go call your parents, or maybe even go read a book, that would be good for you".

He gave a glare that made us become silent and just leave him alone for the time being. He goes to his computer and begins looking at a big presentation due for work. After only a couple minutes, I could see the blank stare of lost hope. I turned to him and asked if he would like to go on a walk with me. He turned with a slight smile on his face and accepted the invitation.

The walk was an average walk. His depression was over once we got back, but it gave him a chance to get out, relax, and just talk to someone.

Depression and anxiety have become a problem in our society. Even for the people who don't have it, they still must deal with the effects of other people having it. This issue is as much of an issue for the people having it, as for the people who surround them seeing them suffer. These problems are very hard to help others with because it is not a physical problem that you can fix with a band aid, or just to let your body heal, this is a cage that they become caught in for a long time. As loved ones we are responsible for not judging them and for loving them whole heartedly.

It was around midnight when I was returning from work to a house that I was house sitting for a couple weeks. Sitting in the driveway was another car. My heart is pounding as I slowly approach the house. Fortunately, it became clear that it was just my dad's car. What is he doing here at this time of night?

I walked in consciously; I had no idea what to expect he was doing. I walked in through the garage, as I opened the door, the dog didn't welcome me as usual. I continued my journey into the family room where my father was sitting reading a book.

"I thought I'd come over to give you company when you got home late, I know it gets a little scary when you get home this late", he said once he noticed me enter the house.

I thanked him and went and changed into my pajamas. My cell phone rang suddenly. It was my mom.

"Ashley, your dad left the house upset a couple hours ago, and he turned off his phone, so I can't get a hold of him, I'm getting really worried. Would you mind praying for him?" She sounded on the brink of tears.

My dad was in the room, and I assumed he did not want me to

rat him out to my mom, so I calmly responded that I would pray for him and his safety.

After the phone call I sent my mom a quick text reassuring her that my dad was with me and that he was safe. I told her that he was most likely going to spend the night on the couch over with me. And

he did. The rest of the night, I talked to him. I listened to him and began to understand exactly what was happening and what he was struggling with. That night I could see the weight be lifted off his shoulders as he was able to open to me and allow me to care for him.