

Real depression more than just the winter blues

We often toss the word around flippantly. We're so depressed by this weather. This news depresses us. The Toronto Maple Leafs win/loss record is depressing.

Truthfully, though, depression – real depression – is much more than just the despair we feel when scraping the windshield of ice or turning off the TV after Vesa Toskala let a soft goal into his net in overtime.

Even temporary feelings of worthlessness and sadness are common. They're normal, they pass and we move on.

But talk to anyone who's suffered from real depression and they'll describe those days when they just can't get out of bed. They'll tell you of not eating, or overeating. They'll recount the

days – seemingly never-ending days – when they felt worthless, insignificant, unwanted and unloved. They'll tell you how this time of year – the dead of winter – sucks the life and hope out of them.

Naresh James

**OF SOUND
MIND**



Or worse: They won't tell you anything. Instead, they opt to hide it, keep it from their family and friends, embarrassed and maybe even a bit ashamed. Maybe they're even good at NOT outwardly showing their depression. They put on the brave - and well-rehearsed - face at work in public and in the locker room.

And that's the real shame. Because depression is hardly the exclusive domain of the disenfranchised, the down and out or the weak of my mind and soul. It can – and does – affect everyone.

Indeed, the Kawartha Lakes – as well as the rest of the country and the world, for that matter – is bracing itself for an economic upheaval that will have an impact on many of our residents' mental health. So, the father in Kinmount should feel no indignity when the plant that employs him shuts down. Neither should the mother whose white collar job was part of a massive layoff. Or the teenager of one of those parents who's also struggling with the pressures of high school and adolescence. No, they shouldn't feel that shame; but often they do.

There's a lot, admittedly, that we don't know about depression and its causes. But we do know this. It's the most treatable of all mental illnesses. It can be overcome. It doesn't have to be permanent. And it's not a sign of weakness. Choosing not to seek help, however, is – especially when that help is so readily accessible and available.

Naresh James is the executive director of the Kawartha Lakes Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. If you think you or anyone you know is suffering from depression, call the CMHA at 328-2704.