

HURT

*I hurt myself today
To see if I still feel
I focus on the pain
The only thing that's real*

This is the beginning to the Nine Inch Nails song, **Hurt**. It was written by NIN's lead singer Trent Reznor during a time that Reznor was deeply entrenched in severe drug abuse. Later the song was rerecorded by Johnny Cash on his final album, **American IV, The Man Comes Around**.

Reznor's lyrics, though centered on his own drug usage, are about realizing consequence and regret. It sends a powerful message that we should all proceed through life wisely, because there is nothing worse than being stuck with a label, a pain, a sickness, or a death, that we know beforehand will leave us only wishing things had been different and that we could change the choices we made.

I have thought a lot about this song this past week because of its title, its message, but mainly because of these first four lines from the song. Hurt and how we deal with pain is a very personal decision that causes all to evaluate both our physical and mental health. This past week, I was again reminded of what hurting can do when our mental health is not where it should be.

Twice in my lifetime, I have gone to work and found out that one of my coworkers had attempted suicide. The first time was 12 years ago, the second, was last week. Both situations were eerily similar. Both involved young men, 22 years old. Both had gotten into a fight with their girlfriends, and both had put a gun to their heads and pulled the trigger.

The first young man, Donnie, had returned back to his mom and dad's home earlier than usual that night 12 years ago. His dad commented as Donnie walked in, "Son, you are in early tonight." Donnie said nothing. Donnie walked into his bedroom, pulled out a shotgun, placed it in his mouth and pulled the trigger. He succeeded in taking his life.

The second young man is Phillip. Phillip seemed to be perfectly fine last Thursday while he was at work. He was laughing and joking during the day, he seemed like he didn't have a care in the world. When I arrived at work the next morning, I found out that Phillip had put a

pistol to his head and pulled the trigger. Phillip did not succeed in taking his life.

The doctors say that Phillip should recover from his self inflicted injuries, not fully and not completely but he should recover physically. He still has the bullet in his brain, his left arm is paralyzed, and he has only partial vision in his left eye. It is too early to tell how much these injuries will heal. The healing will be obvious to assess. A more serious concern for Phillip's long term recovery are the wounds that are harder to assess; Phillip's mental stability.

What can drive a seemingly happy 21 year old to such drastic measures is a mystery to those who know him best. His family was just as shocked as his friends were. His only explanation was that things just built up to the point he could not bear it any longer. How do you evaluate someone's tolerance to their level of stress. That is the challenge for his doctors, his family, and his friends.

Personally, this has given me an opportunity to evaluate my influence on Phillip. Did I share my joy with him or did I share my burdens with him? Did I share the blessings that God has showered on me or did I share the difficulties that life has loaded upon me? Did I help him see the joy in life or did I help him discover more misery in this world? I don't like the answers to those questions.

We have such a blessed life. God has given us far more than we deserve and far more than we need. Unfortunately, many times we are unable to see the blessings that we have until they are taken away or we compare ourselves to someone less fortunate than we are.

My challenge to myself is this;
Try each day to see the blessings that God has showered on me.
Share these blessing with as many as I can as often as I can.
Even on the days when I can't count my blessings, help someone else count theirs.
Help people focus on the silver lining and not on the dark cloud that it encircles.

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Often focusing on the pain is easier than focusing on the joy. The pain is real to us and the joy may seem like a myth. If I can focus on the joy in my life and help others find the joy in their life, maybe together we can save ourselves from the HURT.