“I wish life had an undo button. But alas, it does not”

(Toastmaster, my fellow toastmasters)

Regrets are the ghosts of our past come to haunt us today. They are lurking in our own shadows day and night; peeping over our shoulders to see what we do and at the right time they reach out of the darkness with bony fingered hands to get hold of us and force our hand one way or the other.

Each and every one of us have our own regrets. The ones who say they do not, are either lying through their teeth or having a rather nihilistic view about life.

Regrets are words said or left unsaid, deeds done or left undone, roads taken or left untested.

Regrets are that “what if” thought that make many a human lose their precious night of sleep.

When regrets are ever so strong, they summon another demon from the depths of your psyche; more powerful, more potent and more sinister; *pause* depression.

Has anyone of you ever almost drowned? *look around*

*High volume/passionate/fast*
You try to get a hold but water escapes between your fingers and you can catch nothing.
You feel air escaping like small bubbles from your nose and run up and over your face, tickling as they go and leaving you never to be seen again.
When you look up all light and sound are muffled, distorted and unintelligible.
All your possessions that you cherished; clothes, shoes, jewellery; everything that you held dear become foes that drags you down to the depths below.

When you are drowning your life does not flash before your eyes. All that you have on your mind is fear. Fear and an overwhelming need. The need to breathe. The need to take a chest full of air.

*pause*

*low volume almost a whisper* Depression is like drowning

*pause*

*High volume/passionate/fast*
You try to get a hold of your sanity and rationality. But it escapes between your fingers right in-front of your eyes.
The remaining hope that you had escapes you bubble by bubble and you are helpless and can do nothing.
When you look up from your darkness you see distorted images of reality and hear muffled and unintelligible sounds.
Things that you held dear are the foes that are now dragging you down to the depths below.

*pause*

*low volume almost a whisper* Depression is like drowning

But there is one difference. *pause/look down*
Unlike when you are drowning, when you are depressed, you can look around and see others. Your peers, co-workers, family, friends and total strangers.

And all of them are breathing. Breathing and Breathing. Breathing and Laughing. Laughing and breathing.

Like phantoms made of smoke or reflections on a puddle. Disintegrating at your touch and reforming when you take your hand away.

But real enough to make you distaste your own life.

Sri Lanka once was the country with the world’s highest suicide rate. Even when the police categorize suicide under “crimes”, even when all the major religions of the land was damning the instigator either to hell or denying them of spiritual peace for almost an eternity, even when the society itself was decrying them as weaklings or outcasts. Still suicide was and is rampant in our little island paradise. Most of the society does not do anything but judge them. But I say, none that have walked the dark path should be allowed to judge those who have been forced to do so.

The why of it is diverse from love affairs to domestic harassment to physical disability. Self-preservation is a basic code written in to all of us. But yet each and every one of these fellow humans have come to the conclusion that ending it all is the solution. And it is scientifically proven that the popular belief “One who talks about suicide will not commit suicide” is untrue.

The reason for people succumbing to the siren call of suicide through depression is mainly the feeling of loneliness in their peril. Since we cannot know what others are thinking, we do not know that we are not the first to undergo a suffering of this sort. Literature is littered with tales of unrequited love. Theft and loss happens worldwide. Hundreds fail tests and interviews.

You might meet these people every day. May be at work. May be on your way to work. It can be the owner of the corner shop where you buy your kitchen supplies. It may be the three-wheeler driver you call every morning. Or may be a friend on your facebook page.

As a responsible citizen it is your duty to show them that they are not alone in their peril. It is your duty NOT to laugh at their sadness or mock them as attention seekers.

I call upon you to take heart and act today. Because it very well can be you at the receiving end tomorrow. The safe cocoon you call happiness is as fickle as the morning dew.

Over to you toastmaster.