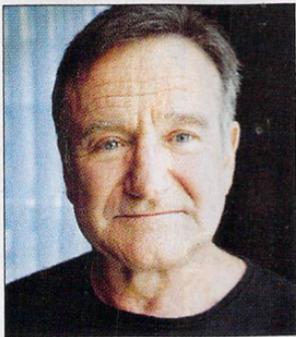


Robin Williams: Depression's deadly grip

Robin Williams “seemed to have it all,” said **Michael Friedman** in *CNN.com*: talent, fame, fortune, the adoration of millions. So when the beloved comedian ended his decades-long struggle with depression by committing suicide, he taught us all a bitter lesson: “Depression does not discriminate, cannot be bargained with, and shows no mercy.” The only good thing to come of Williams’s tragic death is that it has inspired dozens



Lost in the darkness

of sufferers to share their own grueling experiences of depression, raising awareness about this “public health issue.” When I fell into a deep depression as a teen, I felt a total absence of hope—like “all the light around me had been gradually snuffed out,” said **Shealagh Whittle** in *HuffingtonPost.com*. I tried to escape my misery through a suicide attempt, but thankfully, I survived. But whether you’re a “Hollywood legend or high school junior,” recovering from such awful desolation requires professional help.

“If you’ve never suffered from depression,” you really can’t fathom how crushing it can be, said **David Weigel** in *Slate.com*. I’ve been medicated for depression since 2001 and was briefly hospitalized in 2002. Since then, I’ve been pretty functional and now have my dream job—yet I still

struggle with the self-doubt, self-loathing, and fears of failure and abandonment that are depression’s hallmark. It’s a brutal disease that hijacks your mind and your life. Which is why it’s so troubling that some idiots attacked Williams for being “selfish,” said **Dean Burnett** in *TheGuardian.com* (U.K.). People suffering with clinical depression are so submerged in their feeling of worthlessness that they come to believe—however irrationally—

that “their families/friends/fans would be a lot better off without them in the world.”

Perhaps Williams’s death will serve as a wake-up call, said **Dr. Anand Veeravagu** in *TheDailyBeast.com*. An estimated 16 million people in the U.S. suffered at least one major depressive episode in 2012, and about 39,000 Americans commit suicide every year. People with depression deserve our compassion, but they also deserve the same standard of treatment given to those with physical illnesses. There are many tools available to alleviate the symptoms, including psychotherapy, medication, and even electroconvulsive therapy. But even as we make progress in treating this disease, we must “never presume to know the depth of internal battles being waged in the minds of others.”