



The Depth of Your Suffering: Darkness

One afternoon, I was listening to a patient attempt to describe the depth of her suffering and it hit me how deep and hopeless this hole of chronic pain is for most people. I also realized that words were inadequate to encapsulate the degree of misery. Additionally, since no one seemed to have any answers, there was no apparent way out. The description that seemed to fit for this dark, bottomless pit was “The Abyss.”

The Abyss

Patients are bounced around the medical system indefinitely and become discouraged (despondent). My equation for it is:

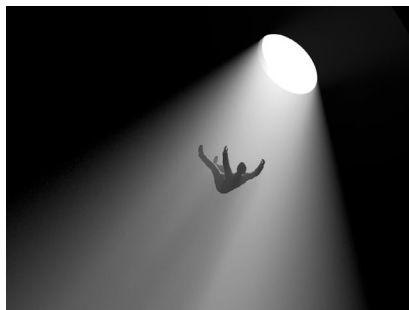
The Abyss = Anxiety x Anger x Time

How deep is this hole? Here is a short list of the suffering I have encountered both personally, and with my patients.

Losses include:

- Independence
 - Financial
 - At the mercy of the disability system
- Capacity to enjoy good music, fine food, hobbies, etc., without the experience being marred by pain
- Peaceful family life
- Feeling good – there are over 30 symptoms created by a chronically stressed nervous system
- Integrity – people don't believe you and often the harder you try to convince your friends, family, peers, employers, and health care providers, the less you are believed.
- Being labeled – malingering, drug-seeker, lazy, not motivated, difficult, etc.
- Unlimited physical activity
- Hope – this may be the worst aspect of it all.

You've lost control of your happiness, ability to engage with your career, family, friends, and hobbies. Understandably, you're angry.



No Way Out

Consider the depth of “The Abyss.” Your soul is being pounded into the ground by a pile driver of anxiety, as you remain trapped in your body, riddled by pain. Your life is being systematically destroyed, but in some cruel cosmic joke, you’re alive to bear witness – without hope.

A recent research paper documented that the effect of chronic pain on one’s life is similar to the impact of terminal cancer (1). You hadn’t anticipated the possibility of your life being consumed by pain. This dark place that develops in your mind is unusually deep – bottomless. And no one is listening.....

References:

1. O’Connor AB. Neuropathic pain: quality-of-life impact, costs and cost effectiveness of therapy. *Pharmacoeconomics* (2009); 27: 95- 112.