



## 'Tis Easier

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### Artist Statement

For unclear reasons, depression seems to remain a topic of discomfort for many. This unfortunate reality often contributes to many who struggle with depression feeling as though they cannot be transparent with others about their illness, and this contributes to the vicious cycle of their plight. Adding insult to injury, it seems there is still a fundamental misunderstanding of depression—at least among some—regarding the fact that depression is not something someone can simply “snap out of” or remedy himself/herself of with great ease. Perhaps it is this misunderstanding and unfamiliarity concerning what depression really is that contributes to the aforementioned discomfort some still seem to have. And to be sure, these observations are not limited to depression per se; indeed, they seem to apply in various ways to mental illness in general.

Societal views of and approaches to mental illness have come a long way in the past several decades, and this laudable advance should not be downplayed in any way. Nevertheless, we still have much work to do as we work toward the fullest realization of empathy possible. In particular, it seems we could—and should—be more comfortable talking about mental illness and mental and emotional well-being, regardless of whether that conversation includes or does not include someone who has mental illness. Additionally, while we certainly want those who are suffering to work diligently toward reaching a better place mentally and emotionally, we also need to accept the reality that there is often no quick remedy to being in that space. For many, mental illness is something that is managed, not cured.

The poem that follows is written from the perspective of the person struggling. Its pessimistic tone is deliberate, but importantly, it is not an indicator of an irrevocably negative state. Having or developing a mental illness does not portend an

invariable or inexorable decline into a helpless or hopeless state. Instead, the poem’s pessimistic tone is offered to allow us an opportunity to reflect on the above issues (and others) through the lens of a person who is currently struggling a great deal—that is, the very person who would greatly benefit from the unmistakable empathy and support of others who are “in his/her corner” to help him/her “fight” for mental health. If we make such exercises a routine practice, our appreciation for the difficulties faced by those with mental illness—and even other illnesses or hardships—stands to increase exponentially. In turn, we would clearly be getting closer to the fullest realization of empathy possible, and with that may come a culture where “the façade” can fade, and we can instead face, embrace, and work toward improving our realities as much as possible. This would not only help clinicians offer better care, but more globally, it may help us better support one another, regardless of the presence or absence of mental illness.

### Poem

'Tis easier  
To offer the façade  
Lips drawn, ends upturned  
Eyes narrowed, teeth slightly borne

For there seems no expression  
No countenance, no visage  
Which can portray  
The truth without consequence

Honesty is admired  
Unless it is inconvenient  
Unless it is grueling  
Unless it is glum

'Tis easier  
To feign normalcy,  
Contentment, and even happiness  
All the while suffering—deeply—the lie.

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And should you dare try  
To simply be  
Be honest, be candid, just be  
You learn quickly the unacceptability

Others rush to provide feckless remedy  
Fueled by the blessing of ignorance  
Tired niceties  
Or the coup of their own deception

Be their actions genuine or compulsory  
Ineffective all the same  
But 'tis easier than engaging  
To simply conjure the façade

We are so willing to accept  
The pleasant façade  
That one needn't do much  
To perfect the con

And though conflicted  
By offering such dishonest reassurance  
It is what's accepted, expected  
Desired

'Tis easier  
To offer the façade

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

Not applicable.

**Ethical Considerations** Not applicable.

**Conflict of interest** The author states that there is no conflict of interest