

How to Break Free from Post-graduate Depression?

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“What now?” is a critical question every college graduate must answer. Some find this to be a piece of cake, while others find it difficult to face. High school graduation is far different from college. In college, they do not just experience mere separation anxiety. After the commencement, most college graduates face uncertainties. “Where will I apply?,” “Am I going to get hired?,” “Will I even get a job?,” and “What if there is none?” are some of the questions that make it hard for some to answer the great “What now?”.

Any sort of transition in life is crucial. Unfortunately, others cannot handle it well. Some graduates tend to loathe and make their own bubble after restlessly finding answers to life’s transition questions. Worse, they experience the so-called ‘post-graduate depression’. Depression, in broad sense, is a common mental condition that affects our thoughts, feelings, and actions negatively. But what makes post-graduate depression different from the generic kind of depression?

From tassel to hustle

It is a common Filipino attitude to assume responsibility for the family after graduation. The sense of immediacy of getting a job is like an innate character and we cannot get rid of this pressure to hustle as soon as possible. It’s like we are naturally programmed to be our parent’s retirement plan, where they will hand over to us adult responsibilities for the family. Adjustment to this phase in life is normally depressing. However, some perpetually get stuck inside this cage.

According to Prof. Lorraine Manansala, a Psychology Instructor at Polytechnic University of the Philippines, post-graduate depression is when you have not yet fully transitioned into becoming an adult and are experiencing what is considered a “quarter life crisis”. Chances are: you are in your 20s, a fresh graduate, or maybe have graduated for a couple of years and become really depressed.

There are several factors that make some people feel depressed after college. It could be their attachment to the college lifestyle, the urgency of finding a job that suits their degree, fear of being underemployed, job application rejections, purposelessness, insecurities, or the uncertainty of the new season of life.

People who experience post-graduate depression lose their self-esteem and enthusiasm in doing things. The good news is, like any other mental condition, post-graduate depression is treatable.

Break-free from fear of uncertainty

1. Acceptance. We normally plan ahead of time for our future. We create personal “ideal life” after college and we have a mindset to pursue a career path that will fulfill such life. The truth is, reality often transcends the ideal. We may not always get what we expect, but remember that it is not the end yet.

2. Focus on the present. Prof. Manansala said, “Do not dwell on the past times you had in college. They may have been fun times; but right now, you are in a rut. Do not compare the present to the past. Focus on what needs to be done right now for your well-being.”

3. Do not compare yourself to others. Avoiding social media is a great help. According to Pitt’s Center for Research on Media, Technology and Health, “The use of multiple social media platforms is more strongly associated with depression and anxiety among young adults than the total amount of time they spend on social media.” Scrolling over news feed and seeing other

people’s life getting better than yours triggers anxiety. Spend less of your time watching other people’s life. Make yours instead.

4. Join clubs. Prof. Manansala suggested that people who have difficult time making friends following college should join clubs. It could be in your community like volunteer organization, yoga class, and other social clubs to keep yourself busy and productive while meeting new people.

5. Medication. Being in a difficult mental health condition is not something to be ashamed of. If you lose your appetite on everything and can’t function well on a daily basis, do not hesitate to see a doctor and take medications. While it does not completely cure the condition, it alleviates one’s mood and stabilizes the neurotransmitters responsible in keeping us positive.

Every college student is prone to this kind of mental health condition and perhaps, the best antidote for the great “What now?” is to appreciate the new season and embrace uncertainty. After all, as what Abraham Lincoln said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.”



by Ma. Leriecka Endico