

Guest Viewpoint: If depressed, please find counseling

David Shapiro 1:16 p.m. EDT August 26, 2014



(Photo: AP)

"Mork and Mindy" was one of the first television shows I remember watching as a child. I also remember seeing "Mrs. Doubtfire" with my family, "Aladdin" on a date, and I truly believe that "What Dreams May Come" helped me better understand the true meaning of love. I have many other fond memories involving "Hook," "Jumanji" and "Good Will Hunting." Like many people I know, Robin Williams shared his gifts with me and I appreciate him for that.

For all the laughter and joy he shared with me through his films, I never truly understood the depth of how well he was acting. Like so many others who struggle with depression, he learned to conceal it from the rest of us. He learned how to "put on a happy face." So it's ironic that if someone walks past one of us during these

moments of sadness, they might not think we looked depressed. With depression that's all too often not the case. People with depression can hide it; they act throughout their lives, trying to hide their illness from the world.

Reflecting back on Robin Williams and all the gifts he gave us, I want to find some meaning in this tragic ending. He spent his whole life acting, and only in his death do we learn the truth about the person that he really was. Williams was a man with an illness. I can only hope that his death can be a message to others who struggle, that all kinds of people in all walks of life suffer with depression, but there is help right here in our community. Reach out. Robin struggled with depression and no one should have to suffer that alone.

We live in a community where there are options for affordable, accessible, compassionate and excellent providers of mental health counseling and treatment. If you're like Robin Williams and you struggle with depression, or you've experienced anxiety, trauma, loss or a transition in your lifestyle, then you should strongly consider making an appointment for counseling and have your mental health assessed. Please don't suffer one more day in silence. Find a place for you to turn to where all your mental health needs can be met.

Shapiro is the president and CEO of the Family & Children's Service of Ithaca.

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