

## Accepting My Depression Helped Me Discover Who I Am

By Ren Fernandez-Kim (they/them or she/her), living with depression

Growing up with depression wasn't easy – especially as a Latinx/Asian-American. Depression was a foreign concept to my family. To them, it wasn't a real illness, and they easily brushed it off as something I could work through. They thought this was just a façade – that my lack of energy was just laziness. This negated what I was going through, creating a vicious cycle of feeling like I wasn't good enough and comparing myself to my peers who didn't struggle in the same ways.

As a queer, Latinx/Asian-American, my identity consists of many intersections. Each layer had its own nuanced stigmas that made me feel as though I never quite belonged anywhere. I never felt I had a safe place to go to for advice or access to resources that would help ME, that showed someone who looked like ME.

I couldn't ask for help, because I didn't know what I needed. Taking time for myself and my mental health conflicted with schoolwork and getting into college. Looking back now I realize how fortunate I was that a professor (who had also known me in high school) pulled me aside and said, “**You need help.**” It was a tipping point for me and something I recognize as a privilege not always available to others.

Depression can affect anyone. It does not discriminate. As a society, we have this false notion that to be successful we must do things on our own, and this couldn't be further from the truth. The process of healing can only begin once we recognize there is work to be done. Mine began when I realized the source of my stress and confronted the made systems of oppression that often tell me I don't belong or deserve a space to exist. I now want to spread the message that we each have a space in this world and building this community of followers who are vulnerable and supportive of one another has been incredible.

For me, the greatest need for LGBTQ+ people living with depression is access to affordable care and effective resources. Not just medical resources, but community and educational resources that make space for intersectional identities and let people know they belong. That is why as someone living with depression, I am thrilled to add my story and my voice to *Depression Looks Like Me*, to show members of the LGBTQ+ community how depression affects us all in different ways. With the right tools and resources, tailored to our individual needs, we can find a path forward. If you are living with depression and unsure of where to turn, I encourage you to ask for help and visit [DepressionLooksLikeMe.com](https://www.depressionlookslike.me).

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