

BRADFORD WRITES  
University of Pittsburgh-Bradford  
Fall 2021

## Feelings

By Linette Goss

I haven't felt feelings for years. No joy, sorrow, pain, happiness, sadness: there's just nothing. I know I love people, like my husband; I love how he is supportive of me and that he is a big burly redneck. I know I love my mother, who supports me and encourages me with all that I do and my baby sister that I trust with my life. My kids who have given me years of joy, sorrow, pain and most importantly my grandchildren. My grandchildren entertain me with their antics and carefree ways, and my extended family that love and care for me through all this stuff I'm going through, but I do not feel love. I do not feel love for myself either. I do not know when this started. I cannot put a date or time on it. I just know my favorite aunt died and I sat there thinking to myself, "I should feel sad about this, but I do not." I look at my husband and know that I love him very much, I just do not feel it.

My psychiatrist says it is because I'm overmedicated with depression medications. I've been weaning off them for a long time now and nothing has changed. He tells me it will get better with time. That's a bullshit answer. It's been years and nothing has gotten "better." If anything, it has gotten worse because I do not even feel anything for myself anymore.

It's just deep depression others say. I know what depression feels like and this is not it. Depression is like being in a hole you cannot get out of. I'm not in a hole. I do not feel like I want to lay in bed all day or just sit around the house doing nothing. I do not feel like I want to commit suicide. I have thought about it, what it would be like just driving into oncoming traffic at high speeds just to end it all. Then I think about the other car. What if there are children in

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there that I inadvertently kill, and I do not die. How would I feel then? I do not know because feeling is lost to me.

Get over it, others say. Yeah, because that is the easiest thing to do. If I could just get over it, I would have done it long ago. I do not know what is wrong with me. It's like my feelings took a permanent vacation to somewhere I cannot get to.

My husband constantly asks me to go to church. Every Sunday he asks if we are going to church. My answer is always no. "Why?" he asks. I cannot give him a straight answer because I do not know how to explain to him that I do not feel God's love outside of church so why go to church to not feel it there too? I am alone in this world.

I have talked to my mother about it many times. She gives me the same answer. "I don't know Linette, maybe you need a therapist." Maybe I do. But then what can a therapist do that a psychiatrist is not already doing? I talk to my husband about it, but I feel it just hurts his feelings to hear me say I cannot feel love for him. He knows I love him. I show him every day. I tell him every chance I get, but it still must fester inside knowing your wife cannot feel love for you or feel the love you have for her. I have thought about talking to my pastor about it, but I fear his answer will be "just pray on it." I do pray. Every day, about this and many other issues going on in my life. Does God hear me? I don't know. Maybe.

I can't remember the last time I actually sat down and thought, "Hey, I feel happy with my life." I have nothing to complain about. I have a roof over my head, food in my belly, clothes on my back, a loving, caring and wonderful husband and all the support of my family while I go on this back-to-school journey. But still nothing. I don't know what it is or when I will "snap out of it," as I have been told by a few people. Some people have the shittiest advice

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ever. It's like depression. You cannot just snap out of it. It's something that has to work itself out of you. Unfortunately, it is taking a very long time for me to work through this.

I was sitting in my mud room about two days ago, smoking a cigarette thinking about my life. I was specifically thinking about losing my husband. He keeps telling me that he is going to die when he is 54 because that is when his dad died. I was thinking about the short time we have been together and all the things that I still want to do with him, like sit on our swing and watch our great-grandchildren swim in the pool. Take a real vacation once I'm done with school and get a decent job. So many things that we have not gotten to do yet.

And it started. A small aching in my chest, that grew and grew and grew until it was so unbearable that I actually started to cry. I could not believe it. For the first time in years, I was actually crying. I was actually feeling something. Grief. The thought of losing my husband so soon had brought me to my knees with grief. It hit me like a ton of bricks. I was feeling something. And then the joy that brought me was absolutely profound. I could feel something. Not just one feeling but two. I'm not saying that I have all my feelings back and I do not expect to just be okay in one day but those two small instances were life changing for me.

As a result of this non feeling, I have become a new and different person. I have realized that even though I do not feel things the way other people feel things does not mean I do not care. I care very much for all my family and friends. I've also realized that all people feel in different ways and just because I can't feel like others do does not mean I am wrong or broken, it just means I'm different.