

What It Means to Suffer, and Why It's Important

[Frank Ostaseski](#) 07/14/17 2:34pm



If we attempt to push away our pain, whether it is physical or emotional, we almost always find ourselves suffering even more.
Pexels

Suffering is a pretty dramatic word. Most people don't think the term applies to them. "I'm not suffering," they say. They imagine children starving in a famine-struck African country or refugees fleeing war in the Middle East or people afflicted with devastating illnesses. We imagine that if we are good and careful, stay positive, play by the rules, and ignore what's on the news every

night, then it won't happen to us. We think [suffering is somewhere else](#).

But suffering is everywhere. This is one of the most difficult truths of existence.

Over the past thirty years, I have sat on the precipice of death with a few thousand people. Some came to their deaths full of disappointment. Others blossomed and stepped through that door full of wonder. Many of them taught me what it meant to [truly understand pain and suffering](#).