

## Supplementary material 2. Selected comments posted on the Reddit platform.

Supplemental material from comments posted on the Reddit platform, specifically in subreddits dedicated to Dark Souls which describe personal experiences related to the game.

Commentaries
You and I both, OP. When I discovered Dark Souls, I was going through an awful break-up. It's almost like the frustration this game gave me while starting out distracted me from being upset with real-life problems.
I've been there too. The first time I beat Dark Souls was during a particularly bad point in my life. One weekend when I couldn't bring myself to do anything; eat, sleep, bathe, you name it. I sat there and just played, and played, and played. I emptied my mind and just focused on one thing. The next boss, getting that next item, finding the next area. Soon enough I faced down Gwyn and emerged victorious. After that, I got up for the first time in over 48 hours. Made some coffee and cereal and actually took time to make sure I was clean and clothed and taken care of. I went outside, and found the sun again. If people think stuff like this is cheesy, let them. Stay determined, op.
I've heard a lot of people through the years say this about Games, but Dark Souls in particular seems to be one that gets mentioned a lot more than any other when it comes to depression. Personally, I think a big part of it is that Dark Souls subconsciously teaches you that everything can be overcome through perseverance. That no matter how dark and bleak life seems, everything gets better if you're willing to put in the hard work. I'm really glad Dark Souls is helping you pal, I know how rough it can be.
It's the hollow curse. It's a great metaphor for depression: you're in a world where everybody has morbid thoughts, they're cynical, afraid of the world, they laugh but you can hear that it's a grotesque façade. They laugh because they want to convince themselves that they won't give up. That their current incarnation isn't the last and that the next time they die, they will still be humans. Spoilers about most of the NPC arcs: I feel that when you're struggling in your life, seeing all these poor bastards struggle helps you. It shows you that even if everything seems wrong with your current life, you have that spark within you. It won't help you accomplish anything by itself, but at least it makes you not give up. You survive, whatever happens. And when you can endure whatever life gives you, you're virtually unstoppable. At least that's my interpretation of the hollow curse. The game has helped me a lot, too.
I've been there, bro. Dark Souls truly is a thing of beauty. It makes us all find strength we didn't know we had.
What it does, I think. The practical themes of the game are frustration, despair, and hopelessness -- you're told from the start that you're just going to go hollow, just going to fail. I played the game with the understanding that your character only wants death or escape, not necessarily conquest. Yet, you're slowly given the tools you need. One after the other, through trial and error, you find yourself winning fight after fight, and the game emphasizes impossible odds. I can't speak for every player, but my first play-through was defined by fear and apprehension, "Can I do this? I'm not sure that I can do this." I think there's something very much relatable in Dark Souls. Cheesy? Yeah, a little, but no less real for it.
It's because Dark Souls emulates the general feeling of depression quite well. Things are shitty. Things are really shitty. That said, they're not going to get any less shitty, so you can either waste your time sitting around or you can figure out how to deal with it. Some things will make it easier for you (e.g. better equipment) but nothing in the world is going to solve your problems for you. You have to face these situations yourself.

<p>Finally, when in doubt, get help from a friend. Sometimes a problem that's insurmountable alone is made immeasurably more manageable with help.</p>
<p>Dark Souls succeeds precisely because it's a game that encourages failure. Other games deal with failure in pathetic or childish ways: they lower the difficulty for you, make it impossible to lose, or reset your progress if you fail too many times.</p> <p>Dark Souls is one of the few games that tells you: No, you didn't do it right, but that's okay. Try as many times as you want, but you need to do it right.</p> <p>In our society, we are terrified of failure. People who fail are heroes, and people who are successful and wealthy should be ashamed for it. In a culture where everyone gets the same medal regardless of their accomplishments, it's easy to get depressed when you don't have any motivation to succeed.</p> <p>But Dark Souls shows you that there are still ways to challenge yourself to be a better version of you wherever you go, whatever you do.</p>
<p>I love the post, I had a similar issue where I was newly sober from...non liquid...things...and struggling greatly to maintain. I picked up a scholar of the first sin and every night just played, and played, and played, it got me through the roughest of patches, the rewarding feeling of failure bringing success is an excellent lesson.</p>
<p>Pretty much me and gaming in general for nearly 30 years now. I was going through a really rough time a few years ago. Of course Dark Souls wasn't even a thing but games always helped me deal with shit.</p>
<p>I feel you, fellow undead. Struggling in DS can be a great source of exercise for RL issues and food for the brain if you're willing to take a more "thoughtful" approach. If you want an extra dose and an example of "not giving up, not breaking up" check [TheUrbanOrb's restricted playthrough.] (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFgrUglYS2w&amp;list=PLUbBsMTgkTRmab1L3snCQk4LB9Ep12OAK">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFgrUglYS2w&amp;list=PLUbBsMTgkTRmab1L3snCQk4LB9Ep12OAK</a>)</p>
<p>I think this goes for a lot of us in the community. I think it's a testament to From making one of the greatest games in history. The way it touches a lot of people's souls is surely amazing.</p>
<p>I was dealing with depression on my first playthrough. The game really helped and every time I think back to when I parried that nerd Gwyn, I nostalgically remember how I parried the fuck out of depression.</p>
<p>Yeah man, this post hits home pretty hard. It sounds pretty f*ed** but Andre of Astora was probably more of a father to me than my actual father, I always felt happy visiting him.</p> <p>Solaire reminded me so much of my older brother whom I've hardly seen at all in the past 8 years, summoning him felt like he was always looking out for me like my brother did when we were growing up.</p> <p>And finally Laurentius, yeah I can't put into words how great of a friend he was.</p> <p>Ultimately though dark souls is a video game and leaving lordran each time reminded me how alone I was, In time IRL stuff slowly got better, It's still not great but there are now some people I value quite a lot. I want to share dark souls with one of those friends as I think it may do him some good too.</p>
<p>I, too, discovered Dark Souls during a really rough patch in my life. It provided a great distraction and the concept of getting back up after you've been slammed down until you've beaten whatever you're up against through sheer force of will really hit home at the time.</p>
<p>I can sympathize. I told this story before but I can't be arsed to find it and copy/paste it.</p> <p>I remember getting stuck on the gargoyles. The gargoyles of all things! They're a joke, right? But that first time playing, I couldn't do it, I just got wrecked every time I tried. I was stuck on them for a weekend. After enough tries I stepped back from the game and chatted with the friend who pushed me to play Dark Souls. He casually mentioned how that fight is trying to teach players that they can't just hold their shield up the whole time. I tried again and it clicked.</p>

Sure, learning that I regained stamina quicker when the shield was down was an important tool for me to learn there. But what clicked for me was that it was the little changes that I needed to pay attention to. That was something I ignored in my life. I had that mis-quote that Far Cry 3 liked to repeat, screwed into my mind (not from the game, but from a former friend) and I lived by that idea. If I try something twice and the end result is the same, then I should never try again. That eventually led me believing that I couldn't do anything, not even the things I really wanted to do. I couldn't keep friends, I couldn't find a decent job, I couldn't lose weight, I couldn't get healthy, I'd never beat Dark Souls, I'd never be an artist. It seems so silly in retrospect. That's no way to live, to try something once or twice and give up, to berate myself because of the results.

That lesson... and Dark Souls as a whole, was the thing that changed my life for the better. I defeated those thoughts. I defeated that ideology. I defeated my depression and I found myself and my motivation to try, to do, to pay attention to all the things (situational awareness) and to improve my life. I started working out, I started drawing as much as I could. Sure, I still lost some friends, but that's life. I lost 60 pounds, I'm drawing a lot more now than I ever have in my life, I went to my doctor and found out what was wrong with my health and got it fixed.

I know this all sounds corny as hell, but Dark Souls changed my life for the better. It was a pivotal moment for me and I'm eternally grateful.

Depression is serious business. If ds is helping you get by then all the best. But it's not a cure-all. Reach out and get some help too buddy.

I like to call it Existential Depression-The Game. It knows who its audience is and caters to us accordingly.

Dark Souls helped me through the initial job application marathon right as college was ending. I work in a very specific tech job so I was applying all over the US just to get a starting job in my field. I did so many cover letters, interviews, call backs, emails, skype calls. I think I sent out around 100+ applications. Every time felt like a total failure.

I picked up the souls series during this time. It kind of reinforced the idea that failure will happen and that success isn't achievable by going through the same motions. I started really tailoring every cover letter and resume. Doing extensive research on the job and the area. Finally after a forced callback I ended up with a pretty good starting job.

Now I'm in a new game plus where I have to fight it all again for that promotion.

I feel the same about the game - it has an incredibly positive message "don't give up - no matter how hard, or low things may seem" and for people like us, its a really crucial message.

I played Dark Souls while I was going through the horrible year-long process of qualifying exams for my English PhD. Beating Dark Souls was harder than studying for exams, and that was so comforting at the time. Because when I made progress in the game, it was like I could definitely make progress in real life, or something.

Going hollow can be interpreted as depression. Its the same concept, the undead of lordran turn into empty husks when their fighting spirit gives out; when they give up. In fact even the chosen undead can go hollow too, when they quit trying. Keep that bonfire burning.

I thought I was alone in feeling this way about the darker moment in my life being oddly relieved by playing, "Dark Souls". It is nice to know there are others out there who have been in a hole but claimed out using the same ladder. Best hopes for you OP and always remember there is a next bonfire to light.

Don't any of you dare go hollow.

That's actually a message that the game is trying to send. The way of the undead is: "If you fall down 7 times, you stand up 8" or something along those lines. That's why there are so many crestfallen warriors spread out the world and that's why you're the chosen undead.

<p>The bleakness of the Dark Souls world makes it even more powerful, for me. Because sometimes, when I'm at my lowest, the world outside my window looks just as bleak. But then I time that roll just right and nick the last sliver of health off of Smough with my Claymore and I feel like I can overcome anything, like that bleakness can't keep me down.</p>
<p>For my depression, dark souls sometimes makes me want to kill myself. Because the world is just so bleak and dark... and hopeless I have to make sure my mind is in a good place before I sit down and play it.</p>
<p>Chiming in to say I feel the same way about this game, I've learned so much about myself from it.</p>
<p>I understand where you're coming from. Dark Souls gave me a thought that I rarely had in everyday life: "Well, what are you gonna do, quit?" It's good to be able to take joy in a struggle for once. The game is absolutely therapeutic.</p>
<p>Dark Souls helped me too, I was going through a very difficult personal time, I picked up Dark Souls just to have something to distract me. I didn't even have any interest in it as I'd dabbled with Demons Souls and couldn't get into it, so the next game wasn't on my radar at all. I was low as shit and Dark Souls was released... fuck it, I'll see what the fuss is about, maybe I was wrong about Demons Souls. And you know what? I really, really was. I threw myself into Dark Souls and loved every moment of it, it will always be a very important game to me as it helped get my mind off bad things. That Firelink Shrine music will always take me back there and remind me how bad I felt and how good it is to have gotten out of those bad times.</p>
<p>I'm in the same boat. Here's something I've found that helps: every time you die, do a set of some exercises. I personally alternate 10 push-ups and 20 situps. That way, as your character gets stronger, not only does your skill increase, but so does your personal, physical strength.</p>
<p>Excellent post OP, totally not cheesy at all. If anything, be it game, film, books, whatever helps you get through the long dark of the night, then that's a solid in my book. The fact that it's Dark Souls for you is just super awesome. Praise the Sun, Bro.</p>
<p>I'm bipolar and have been wrestling for many years now with depression so I can relate. Dark Souls has helped in the past and I expect the third one to be another great experience. Take care of yourself!</p>
<p>Dark Souls has a special spot for me too. I got very sick a few years ago and Dark Souls helped me cope through it all. Co-op especially put a smile on my face; I love how silly the community is. I don't think it's cheesy to enjoy something, or to want to share that. It helps make sure that other great games get made to help people!</p>
<p>This game helped me reconnect to two of my best friends and also helped me through a really rough patch in which I felt unable to compose or write music of any value. It helped me emerge victorious and that's why I tried to immortalize my interpretation of Darkroot Garden in song. Great post, OP. It's nice to hear that so many of us have felt the same way.</p>
<p>I'm so glad to read a post like this because even though I don't struggle with depression I know many close friends who do. While playing the game everything in the theming and the gameplay hints at coping with death and fighting for hope and meaning in a life you are directly told means nothing. But in playing and finding meaning it helped me finally relate to some of the depression my friends struggle with. I never talked with anyone about it but I'm glad to see the feelings I had are reciprocated.</p>

<p>I can relate. Also, sometimes something dark and bleak, like Dark Souls, is all that can reach you when you're down. In a strange way it can be comforting, act as a glimmer of hope that still feels real... because it's bleak like everything else. I'm rambling. Good luck man.</p>
<p>I agree completely, Dark Souls is one of my "sadgames". You might be interested in this video series by Eurogamer on gaming and mental health. I'm not sure Dark Souls gets a mention actually but it would definitely fit the mold.</p>
<p>Reading this means everything to me today. Going through a rough patch myself. Thank you for sharing and reminding me not to go hollow. Someday I'll find my sun.</p>
<p>For me it's been the same with Demon's Souls. You have a heart of gold, don't let them take it from you, OP</p>
<p>It's funny because I have a similar story but with a completely different ailment. Earlier this year, I caught mono and was out of commission for a good month. Not only that, my sciatica was flaring up so I was in constant pain. I somehow was able to make it to the final boss. By the time I did, the symptoms had subsided.</p>
<p>I know how you feel,op. I also suffer from depression. The soul series as a whole helps me so much. The games and community are some of the greatest ever. Not to mention a lot of the characters I just want to hug or just hang with. Andre and Giant Blacksmith are true friends in a world full of enemies. Same with Benhart "the juice" of jugo and my dear Lucatiel. I could sing praise after praise for the games in how they improve my mood every time I sit and play them. Keep strong, op. No one wants to see you go 'ollow</p>
<p>Dark souls is still my stress reliever game. Especially when you've completed the game a few times it feels good to be "in control" of something.</p>
<p>Dark souls is just so real in spite of it being a dark fantasy. Something about its cynicism and bleakness feels authentic compared to the image portrayed in so much media. I'd say it helped me with depression because it rekindled my faith in gaming and media which is in general depressing to consume because of how soulless all of it feels. I was at the point of quitting gaming prior to picking up demons souls, now I'm basically an unpaid member of their marketing dept. Im always telling people to give it a shot and occasionally getting a friend to stick with it and loving the game(s) like we all do. It's a good feeling to get a friend to play it and come away with such a similar sense of awe at the game design and overall experience. Oh and if you haven't played the other games in the series, make sure you do at some point. They are not to be missed</p>
<p>I agree bro. This game is awesome. I get depressed too and this game us the best thing when I'm feeling shitty.</p>
<p>I would think getting your ass kicked in this game would give you depression, not help it... Then again, I'm depressed too and this game has me too busy focusing on fueling anger and rage into my Chaos +5 weapon to slaughter my killers. Either way, good on you.</p>
<p>Despite Dark Souls being a pretty dark game (duh), playing it for the first time gave me such a sense of adventure and wonder, always wanting to see what the area beyond the corner is like. Entering Darkroot Garden or Anor Londo or Ash Lake for the first time, that feeling. Great to hear that playing DS has made you feel better.</p>
<p>I feel this is an intentional mechanic by Miyazaki, let me explain: Dark Souls 2 I feel saved me from depression or something of the sort. When I played that game, I hadn't finished a game for 2 years. I gave up every single time because I just didn't have the urge to complete them. Now I didn't feel depressed or anything at this stage of my</p>

life, but I had noticed my lack of desire or will to complete any task or goal in my gaming life and somewhat in my actual life.

Dark Souls 2 brought that realization to the forefront of my mind, and taught me that giving up in life was like going hollow, becoming a shell of myself, someone 'human' with a human instinct of survival. It taught me through its mechanics that if I give up in the game, I will end up giving up on my life.

Miyazaki's rise into gaming superstardom is something to be admired. The man grew up poor and had no life ambition, had a day job he worked his whole life for yet did not enjoy. It was the game ICO that inspired him to create games, that inspired him to tell a story about his own life struggles.

If you read about Miyazaki's life you will see how much of it is told through the gameplay of dark souls and how much the ideas about 'striving to achieve' and 'never giving up' are entwined with the game and Miyazaki's own desire to reach out to others through the gaming medium.

Good luck with your depression and remember, there is no Game Over unless you choose there to be.

I'm constantly reminded how overall nice the dark souls community is. Just a bunch of pleasant folks getting destroyed, then getting cheered up by each other.

Im glad its helped you, its nice to see it have such an effect on some people. Its ironic since playing this game sometimes makes many people feel dead on the inside.

It's not cheesy. There's something profound about the effect this game has on me and obviously you as well. I can never explain why but it is the most beautiful game I have played

I understand, OP. My depression had been developing in the time leading up to me discovering DKS. There is something soothing about how bleak the world of Lordran is. Discovering a whole world of secrets is one of my favorite memories in gaming. Honestly, I think the game thematically has elements of despair in it and some people can just relate to that really well.

That being said, things get better. Seek help if you need it. Don't let it get the best of you.

Not cheesy at all. Great post! If you haven't already, you should give the Twin Humanities podcast a listen. One of the guys (CJ, I think) talks about how Dark Souls 2 helped him work through his own bout of depression.

Not cheesy at all. I found Demon's Souls very helpful during a recurrence back in 2010 and have found the various follow ups helpful at times since then.

Hey, I've been there. And while I was long since out when Dark Souls came out, I think I can say rightly that Dark Souls helps keep me on even keel. There is something about it that drives me.

It helps that the game wants you to beat it but challenges you to do so. The entire game is hostile towards stopping your progress. Ancient demons who have wandered the lands for a very long time are not going down without a fight. As you conquer each challenge you become stronger (literally, souls are the only way to level up and buy upgrades). It's rewarding to see a game do this and it gives feels. Feels that I personally haven't felt from any other game except my first play through of OoT many years ago.

Dark souls keeps me entranced and takes my mind off a lot of things. Cheer up op

Me too mate.

I think the best part is that it makes time pass when the days are so horribly long.

Hang in there.

Yeah, I can definitely relate. There was a discussion about how it feels to be an enemy or boss in these games, to constantly defeat the chosen undead only for them to respawn and try again.

I started to play Demon's Souls in a very difficult moment. It went through with me, helped me a lot of every single day. And when Dark Souls released I was still pretty down. Nowadays, when I feel broke, I still go back to Lordran to feel like home. Yeah, when everyone said it is a depressing world, for me it is warm and... home.

Personally, I am a pretty shitty player. An old fogey that plays on keyboard and mouse and refuses to get a controller. That being said, I have taken the game to NG7 with a SL1. Not because I am good, but because I fought some of those bosses hundreds of times. Using save game files with me parked at the fog wall made it tolerable. Each fight added some brain wiring as to what did not work. Eventually success was found. And it becomes easier with each NG+. As the saying goes, even a blind squirrel sometimes gets a nut. So yeah, keep it up.

Dude. You could not have put better words to how I feel about the game. Due to my depression, I came to no longer enjoying my number one past time (video games) and through Dark Souls I have come to enjoy what I used to spend all my time doing. The challenge of the game can be a bit frustrating but working through it and achieving something leaves me so satisfied. I hope you continue your progress in game and with your depression :)

I understand this completely, for a couple years now I've been having some very hard times. But this game feels almost like a warm hand on my shoulder. Especially with characters like the Crestfallen Warrior, it's like the game knows me on a personal level. The bleak pessimistic overtones are a lot like my outlook on life. And I must admit I crack a smile every time I hear Laurentius say, "don't you dare go hollow"

My best friend killed himself in 2013 and this game was the only way that I was able to "bond" with him and give myself closure. His last words to me were through steam, talking about killing Artorias. The next day after I found out, I attempted to kill NG+ Artorias probably over 20 times in a blinding rage before calming down and actually fighting him and winning. This game does wonders as a therapist.

Playing Dark Souls can be such an important metaphor for dealing with difficult times in our lives. Some of the ideas that stood out for me were:

1. You have to tell yourself that you can get through this difficult part, believing otherwise would mean you would not even try.
2. Failure is just a learning process. It does not mean that you are a failure, just that you need to keep trying until you find a way to move forwards.
3. Learning is refining. You refine skills and techniques so that you work smarter instead of working harder.
4. Unsurmountable obstacles always appear far less intimidating after you have conquered them. This is just like the fears that hold us back. Once we know this, the next obstacle does not intimidate so much.
5. Dark thoughts are only temporary, just like the Depths. We will always find a way through however difficult that may be.
6. Praising the Sun has many benefits.
7. The archers in Anor Londo are like many of the worst people we meet on our journey. Keep to the path and instead of trying to meet them head on, roll to avoid getting frustrated.
8. If you can overcome Ornstein and Smough, however you manage it, you can do anything, including beating depression.
9. In the darkest parts of your journey, moments of humanity and kindness stand out clearer.
10. Kindling is good. Lighting a fire to drive away the darkness is a moment of hope and victory. We can find ways to kindle inside ourselves when we have moments of small victory against the darkness and these small moments of victory on the way become landmarks that signal our own progression towards the light. We can look back at them when we feel all is lost and see that we can get through this.

Edit: spelling

<p>Darksouls has definitively helped with my depression, it's better than sitting around browsing the internet, because it makes you feel like you're actually accomplishing something, which is uplifting.</p>
<p>The sheer beauty of Dark Souls as a story, as a game and as entertainment always help put a smile on my face. I'm glad to hear that it does the same for others, too. Praise the Sun, fellow undead.</p>
<p>Dark Souls, bringing all the depressed gamers together.</p>
<p>You and me both. I think Solaires not a bad example, he's lost everything, he's never actually going to achieve his goals, people think he's naive and he knows they do. But he doesn't care, he does the right thing by others and refuses to give up no matter how infinitely bleak it all is. I could never be convinced that I can change anything or that there's even any point to life, but I've been convinced to struggle at least as a fuck you to depression and this shitty world. So I try to do right by others(even down to changing careers) and I don't stop, even when things are at their worst because I don't need comfort or some inner peace bollocks, I need to keep pushing.</p>
<p>Hold on, my friend. Keep going, because the will to continue is what matters. That's what this game teaches us. We are not the weight of all our memories.</p>
<p>Word. It seems like it should be cheesy, but there is some solid goodness here, and its so true. Whenever I have a bad day, it takes maybe 20 mins of Darksouls to not only forget about it, but feel better about it. Sometimes a game transcends basic entertainment to become something more.</p>
<p>I feel the same about Dark Souls, i was like many here going through a rough break up. It healed me.</p>
<p>I do as well. I used it as escapism. I am glad you use it in a more positive manner than I.</p>
<p>I thankfully haven't struggled with depression in years, but I feel Dark Souls has changed me still. I'm a lot less frightened to do hard thing, or to fail. I just pick myself back up, and try again. It's the zen of Dark Souls. Who would have thought that a work of dark fantasy that has despair as its main theme would be so apt at giving hope?</p>
<p>I'm depressed and play dark soul as well. It's the fate of the undead.</p>
<p>Mate, a dear family member of mine suffers from depression and I know how bad it can be so I came here to say: You fucking got this. Yes you will get knocked down, but victory lies in simply getting back up and throwing yourself into the fight. Everything follows from that simple action. Also wanted to make the comment that this game has made big difference in my life for other reasons. Two years ago I started my own business and I started playing Dark Souls about a year and a half ago. I've had so many ups and downs on my own personal journey, so many rejections along the way, and through it all, I've just had to keep going, keep getting up and fighting another day. I learned something through every failure, to the point that failing wasn't failing, it was putting me one step closer to my goals. And Dark Souls has helped tremendously in reinforcing that determination to continuously get up and fight again, even on the days where I was ready to throw in the towel and give up. 2 years later, I'm so happy that I've stayed the course...I've learned a huge amount and the business is on solid footing.</p>
<p>I'm sure a lot of people will have posted similar things. I'm with you OP. Picked up this game after a breakup. Like so many things after that point it got side-tracked and buried. But when I came back to it, not only did it keep me entertained, my mind off things BUT realise once again the art in video games. Such great, bleak and wonderful storytelling.</p>

I was just thinking about exactly that last week.  
I've had some depression episodes before, and I can feel I'm still always very close to fall down the rabbit hole again. And maybe that's the reason I find those game extremely compelling.  
One of the biggest caused/created by depression is the [Learned Helplessness](#). Something very real about those games, is that you often encounter a situation where the first thought that crosses your mind is "Oh wow, I am never going to be able to pass that". And more often than not, you realise that this feeling was a real miscalculation of the situation and it take just a few tries to be able to pass that difficult moment ; and makes you understand that even though sometimes things seems completely overwhelming at first, your subconscious might be completely wrong about it, and sending you inappropriate signals, which is an important thing to understand to overcome depression. Your perception of reality can be wrong, even though it FEELS right. But sometimes it IS actually hard, and takes a lot of trials to be able to overcome it, and that definitely uses some of your willpower. To overcome depression, willpower becomes a very rare and precious ressource, and video games can provide a "safe" environment to train that "muscle".  
Now, outside of the game mechanics, the whole game can be seen as a story to fight depression. Becoming hollow is losing your humanity, giving up on life. The fuel of life (the fire) is almost gone, and people have lost their willpower. Even the Souls community understood this concept, and calls a Hollow someone who gave up on despair, and stopped playing the game (which from the lore perspective is probably what happens to your character if you stop playing the game).  
In order to fight this hollowing, you will have to accomplish incredible deeds, and even go all the way to defy Gods. This can easily represent the irrational fears you get when you are under depression, and need to do some seemingly simple task (Go to buy some food, to the hairdresser, meeting friends,etc...), but get overwhelmed by how difficult this simple task seem to be at the time.  
So in a way, playing Dark Souls IS overcoming your depression, and makes you realise you can do all those things with your own life as well.

I would credit the entire Souls' series for this. Going through a rough patch, frustration led to anger a ton of times to a point where everyone I knew was pretty much sick of me.  
I used to snap for no reason. Lost every bit of patience, got fired too once. Started with Demons Souls and later Dark Souls and it did introduce me to the concept of 'patience'. Worked better than any therapy session would.

It's like the abusive relationship that actually has a happy ending. I've been where you're at man. It's therapeutic to really insert yourself into the story. The best is when you battle for hours, getting killed, coming back, inching through tight spots, getting in a quick heal before certain death, and then when you finally reach that bonfire sitting alone in the dark, you can just rest and have that brief moment of respite. Then the journey begins again.

I do too... I found Dark Souls to be a blessing and a curse.  
Yeah, it's nice to feel like I'm learning to get better and better at (my favorite) a game, or anything for that matter, but I noticed something about myself and my depression. I noticed it's about getting into a rut. And so every so often I catch myself spending 3 or 4 days obsessing, doing nothing but wanting to play DS, drinking some beer, maybe smoking weed too.  
But then I broke the cycle. One day I was like "fuck this" got up off the couch and just started doing stuff. Riding my longboard. Rock Climbing. Doing Yoga.  
I feel for you OP, I been there. But don't lock yourself into a cycle that's too comfortable to escape from.  
And if you ever want to talk I'm here.

I see it more as comforting in the sense that no matter what I do in the game, everyone still goes hollow or dies eventually, leaving me knowing it doesn't matter, and let's me just focus on the next bonfire.

People with depression never really recovers forever, it comes back sometimes, just like how in dark souls 1 your humanity is never constant and being in rhe state of human or zombie is also not constant. Losing your humanity will slowly but surely brings you closer to hollowing but you can also fight back and find some humanity out and about.

When your mental health is getting worse because of circumstances, it's your character slowly but surely hollowing from dying to challenges. When you give up and let yourself be, that is going hollow. You could also steal humanity from other people by killing them, a metaphor for "energy" vampires leeching on your mental health until you get to their level. Or you can help another lost soul like you to ease their circumstances which in turn helps them to not hollow and also gives you humanity in return, implying friendships and relationships being a major factor in mental health.