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## Nicholas Brendon fighting depression with hugs

**Shannon Heupel**, Montgomery Advertiser Published 2:38 p.m. CT Aug. 21, 2017 | Updated 3:20 p.m. CT Aug. 21, 2017

*'Buffy' and 'Criminal Minds' star wants to meet, hug fans who have depression like him when he visits Montgomery in October*



(Photo: Paul Warner/Getty Images)

When Nicholas Brendon makes the journey to downtown Montgomery in October, his role as Xander Harris on TV's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" is bound to be a huge draw for the Wizard World Comic Con crowd.

"I was fortunate enough to do a show that was very iconic," said Brendon during a recent phone interview. Buffy was on TV from 1997-2003. Fourteen years since the show ended, it's a role he's still recognized for by the fans. "Pretty much all the time Xander. That and Kevin Lynch on 'Criminal Minds.'"

[Abracadabra! Montgomery lands Wizard World Comic Con](http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/entertainment/2017/08/14/wizard-world-bringing-huge-stars-comics-montgomery/565445001/)

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But those roles are just roles, not who he really is inside.

"I fight depression on an epic level," said Brendon. "I talk with my fans about that as well."

In Brendon's words, "Depression just sucks." It's lead him into dark corners of life. But instead of just focusing on his own painful side, he uses events like Wizard World to reach out in person to fans who have their own struggles. People with anxiety. People who are insecure. People who feel bullied. People who stutter like he used to for years. People with depression.

"Trust me, people out there are depressed," said Brendon. "They're depressed in your town."



Actor Nicholas Brendon from the TV show Buffy the Vampire Slayer attends day 1 of the 25th annual Motor City Comic Con at Suburban Collection Showplace on May 16, 2014, in Novi, Michigan. (Photo: Paul Warner/Getty Images)

In real life, Brendon is one of millions in the U.S. with depression. It can have different effects on adult men and women, seniors and children. According to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Alabama, major depression affects about 5 percent of the U.S. adult population in any given year. That's roughly 9.9 million adults. People with this condition should seek out a doctor or mental health professional to determine the best course of treatment.

So what can one person like Brendon at a comic convention do to help others with depression, and maybe himself along the way?

In Brendon's other words, "hugs heal." He wants to hug his fans, especially any who are battling depression. If a fan needs a joke, Brendon will give them one. If they want a hug, he's more than willing.

"I'm not an actor. I'm a person who acts," said Brendon. "I'm a human being. I just want to help people as much as I possibly can in my short time here on this planet."

Brendon's career has crossed a lot of ground, as an actor in movies and TV shows, theater, cartoon voice, video games, working with comic books, and even producing his own webcomic. He has several projects in the works currently, including three movies and a TV series "Dark/Web" in post production.

"I'm decent at actually playing other characters," Brendon said.

According to NAMI, depression is a lot different than just feeling down or sad. It's a disorder that causes people to be profoundly sad and irritable. It can cause major changes in sleep, appetite and energy. It can make it difficult to think or remember, and cause people to be agitated. It can cause people to feel guilty, worthless, hopeless and empty, and often comes with thoughts of death and suicide.

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There's no single cause of depression, but there are treatments available. According to NAMI, about 80 to 90 percent of people suffering from serious depression can be returned to their normal life.

However, because of the stigma in society attached to depression, many people don't ever want to talk about it. Ironically, it can make them into actors, trying their best to hide their condition from everyone around them. That's where people like Brendon step in, to raise awareness and get people like his fans to feel less afraid about admitting they have depression. With less fear, more people may seek out treatment.

"There has to be more of a dialogue about depression," said Brendon. "I have to deal with it every day."

That's why it's so important for him to help fans who are going through similar issues. He'll be at Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center for a three-day event Oct. 20-22, with other special guests including Nichelle Nichols ("Star Trek"), Jon Heder (Napoleon Dynamite, The Benchwarmers), Emily Swallow ("Supernatural," "The Mentalist"), Holly Marie Combs ("Charmed," "Picket Fences") and Briana Buckmaster ("Supernatural," "White Ninja"), and more to be announced.

More information about Wizard World is available online at [wizardworld.com/comiccon/montgomery](http://wizardworld.com/comiccon/montgomery) (<http://wizardworld.com/comiccon/montgomery>).

"If I can make your life better for one day, then I've done a great job in my life of that day," Brendon said. "I just want to help people as much as I possibly can when I meet them in that moment.... I just want to hug anyone who needs a hug."

Learn more about depression online at [namialabama.org](http://namialabama.org) (<http://namialabama.org>).

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