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# Sports Stack

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## From Depressed to Possible MVP

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Written by [kylestack](#) on 10/12/2010 7:55:24 AM

Joey Votto was on top of the MLB world this past season. The 26-year-old Cincinnati Reds first baseman led his team to its first playoff appearance in 15 years, and he stands as a National League MVP candidate as a result of his fine play. It's incredible to think how different this year has been for him versus in 2009.

Scan Votto's '09 stats, and you'll notice the 131 games he played. You might think that was a result of an injury that left him on the disabled list. While he was on the DL, it wasn't for a physical injury -- it was for depression. Votto was officially tagged by the Reds medical staff with social anxiety disorder, which the website WebMD describes as "an excessive and unreasonable fear of social situations." He explained the specific reason for his negative mental state in a candid conversation with reporters last year.



Votto's father passed away in August 2008 at just 52 years old. The myriad of emotions from dealing with the aftereffects of that, as well as managing persistent dizziness from an inner-ear infection early in the '09 season, led Votto to battling depression and anxiety attacks. He left the Reds May 30 of that season, was placed on the DL and returned in mid-June after receiving medical attention.

That he finished the '09 campaign with outstanding numbers -- .322 batting average, 25 home runs and 84 RBIs -- is a testament to his baseball ability. However, there are more important things in life than just work. Family is paramount, but so is keeping yourself in good spirits. A study performed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from 2006-08 found that nearly one in 10 Americans were depressed. One in 30 of the 235,000 adults surveyed in 45 U.S. states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands met criteria for major depression. It's a more common condition than many people realize.

Of course, many folks think athletes couldn't possibly be depressed. They make large amounts of money, are gainfully employed and have people clamoring for their attention all the time. They're beloved by people they've never met. But that's not fulfilling to everyone, Votto included. He had to learn how to cope with his father's death, and he likely became a better man for it once he made amends. Now, he's in a better place after completing a season in which he became recognized as one of the best players in the game.

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