

# OUT OF DARKNESS by Debra Holz

## EXCERPT

### INTRODUCTION

As my eyes slowly flutter open, the blinding glare from the light on the sterile white ceiling causes me to wince. An I.V. bag dangles at the end of a silver pole, its line connected to a needle in my arm. I feel numb yet overwhelmed with despair. My mind is too groggy to comprehend what's going on.

"Debra, do you know where you are?" a woman asks authoritatively.

I don't. Wherever I am, the last thing I want is to be there, or anywhere.

"You're in the emergency room at Western Psychiatric Hospital," she explains, a bit more gently. I can see through dim eyesight that she appears to be a nurse. "Do you know why you're here?"

I'm too sleepy to be concerned with her question. She pinches my arm hard to awaken me. I can see through the window that it's dark, so it must be nighttime. Gradually, the fog clears as the nurse waits for me to respond. Obviously, my plan to kill myself had failed.

The impulse to end my life had consumed me since age 17, and it nearly did win the night before. My plan was firm: Drink enough wine to douse my fear, grab one of the loaded guns that my criminal defense attorney husband, Harrison, kept in our house, and shoot a bullet through my temple. For a decade leading up to this evening, I was too afraid to directly commit suicide, not knowing the possible spiritual consequences (if there is such a thing) in the afterlife. So, I routinely played an alcohol-and-sleeping-pill bedtime roulette, hoping that with the right spin of the sedative wheel, I wouldn't wake up in the morning.

That fateful night, my drinking binge led to a blackout, which preempted my attempt to finish what I'd started. After I came to in the early morning hours, I told Harrison about my death intention. With a shrug of disgust, he walked into the other room, turned on the television, and proceeded to watch some sporting event. About six hours later, he drove me to Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic.

The nurse pinches my arm once more, and that's when I come to my senses and realize that, somehow, I'm still alive. I am deeply and acutely disappointed by this awareness.

What preceded this incident was fifty years of depression, an illness that told me what to think not only about myself but also the meaning of life, death, and the elusive truth about personal value and purpose. It dictated who I was, what to believe and how to feel. A faithful tormentor, depression refused to leave me alone no matter how much I pleaded and sometimes prayed to a deity whose existence I doubted. A merciless opponent, this illness was determined to enslave me with its chronic emotional and mental floggings. All those years, it never ceased and had no regard for how weary I had become.

My brain began wiring itself for depression from the early years of my childhood. Being in its clutches dominated my life by regulating how my brain functioned and allowed despair to overtake my other emotions. Through my teen years and well into adulthood, depression didn't care about my positive experiences, accomplishments, and other things that should have made me happy. It marred and even ruined what should have been joyous occurrences and events such as my advanced education, career success, dream house with my new husband, and my children's births.

If you suffer from depression, which I assume you might since you're reading this book, you may feel as I did that there's no escape from the misery. But there is. In fact, healing is possible. After a lifetime of suffering, I finally healed my depression outside of traditional medical methods. I reveal on these pages how I step-by-step revolutionized my beliefs, rewired my brain—thereby changing my neurochemistry—and created methods and habits to secure the longevity of my newfound joy and peace. Since 2014, I haven't had an episode of depression! Hard to believe, isn't it? I no longer doubt that it's true and doable.

Healing through depression was, for sure, a spiritual awakening. As I grew through my healing process, my perception of the God I was introduced to as a child changed and expanded my consciousness. For clarification, when I use the word "God" within these chapters, it isn't quite an accurate noun for what I consider "source, divine awareness, the creator." So, for the sake of simplicity and since for many it's common usage, I will say "God" interchangeably with these other terms.

My healing journey was a deep dive into the realms of science, as well. I share how quantum physics is relevant to healing depression, as well as how the brain works and how to rewire it away from depression. I also share emotional, spiritual, and behavioral exercises that, little by little, you'll

be able to integrate into your own life. As you take tiny then small steps at first, you'll discover an increase in your life force energy. Eventually, you will be able to work on bigger and bigger tasks towards full healing.

First, let's review a definition of depression and its ramifications. The Mayo Clinic describes depression as "a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness ... [that] affects how you feel, think, and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems." According to the World Health Organization, depression is a leading cause of disability; worldwide, it's estimated that 264 million people suffer from it. Interestingly, more women experience depression and suicidal ideations than men, but men have higher rates of successful suicides. And the United States ranks as one of five countries with the highest numbers of depression sufferers. Though there may be other causes of depression, it is typically attributed to factors such as the brain's faulty neurological mood regulation, genetics, emotional and physical trauma, childhood neglect and abuse, and major life stressors, including serious medical issues. What's more, the National Institutes of Health reports that depression is associated with a higher risk of early mortality, and approximately 7.9 fewer years of life expectancy.

Unfortunately, those who haven't suffered from depression sometimes expect a depressed person to just "snap out of it . . . stop the self-pity . . . think positive." But when a person is clinically depressed, it's typically impossible to "snap out of it" or simply solve the issue by thinking positively. While it may appear that a depressed person is self-pitying, they are usually filled with self-contempt and shame about their condition, as I was. And "recovering" without guidance and other forms of help is unlikely.

When I attempted to feel better, a haunting sadness assured me that I couldn't escape the darkness and pain. As the years passed with no relief, the belief that something was intrinsically wrong with me and that I would never get better gained momentum. At the same time, I couldn't shake the sensation that disaster was right around the corner. I harbored the continuous terrorizing sense that I was in ocean-deep water with my chin just above the surface, dogpaddling like crazy so I wouldn't go under. I knew that if I did, it would be the end of me.

I got plenty of traditional counseling over the decades, starting with my first therapist at age 17. I accepted what she and all my subsequent mental health professionals told me about my biologically based, supposedly incurable illness. For over three decades, the psychiatrists and therapists who considered me their patient insisted that only therapy and psychiatric drugs would help me gain power

over my depression. Looking back, I believe that they truly wanted to help me. Yet, despite their efforts and my earnest attempts to feel better, I remained powerless. Though I functioned—at times scarcely or not at all—I passed through the decades barely engaged in life. For those who didn't know me well, most of the time, I appeared to be functional and, well, “normal.” I completed my bachelor's degree by age 21 and began my professional life, at which I succeeded, eventually owning my own company at age 29. At times, I appeared happy, I even had a sense of humor, and was talkative and outgoing; this was all a façade. From my outward appearance, I may have seemed fine; but inside, I was tormented. Only those closest to me knew.

By my late forties, the pain of depression and all the meds I was taking were not only emotionally but also physically debilitating. It occupied my mind *and* body. I could focus on nothing else. I dreaded the future and saw no possibility of relief ahead. It all culminated in 2007, when I intentionally drank too much wine and located Harrison's gun. If he hadn't taken me to Western Psych, I most probably wouldn't have made it—which wouldn't have been the worst-case scenario. In fact, despite my desire to be free from pain, I felt paralyzed and suffered terribly from my inability to follow through with suicide. Besides dooming my children, I envisioned that the horror of a failed attempt might render me conscious yet stuck in a useless, wordless body—and more disconsolate than ever. Being trapped with emotional and mental torment forever, unable to communicate or move—still not knowing what will happen when I die—would be, I imagined, the most inescapable torture of all.

This is what struck me as I slowly awakened in the emergency room at Western Psych and what eventually gave me the courage to find a better way, beyond traditional therapy and pharmaceuticals, to finally take control of my health, my mind, my life. It was, essentially, a turning point from dark to light.

That is why I've titled this book *Out of the Darkness: Aligning Science and Spirit to Overcome Depression*. Not only have I healed my depression through means outside of traditional mental health treatment, I've also been lovingly led into the light—a persistent, impenetrable condition of joy, contentment, and peace. For that, I am abundantly and endlessly thankful. It is nothing short of a transformation into a way of being that I had never dreamed was possible. Every morning, I awake joyful and grateful to have been gifted another depression-free day. As of this writing, I am eight years without depression's malevolence. I still can hardly believe it. I marvel when life continues to throw difficult challenges my way, but I remain mostly unfazed.

I fear not because I know that I am beyond the risk of descending back into the darkness. Finally living fully and embracing life consciously, I now feel a sense of responsibility and purpose to share my experience with those who suffer with this dreadful/deplorable condition. My mission is to shed light on effective alternative ways to heal, so that others may emerge out of the darkness and enjoy lives of joy, health, and peace.