

FOR FIVE ENTIRE DECADES, my life was dispassionately ruled by the crippling grip of a chronic, unrelenting depression. A merciless opponent, it was determined to outthink and enslave me, ever present, planning its next move, and its next move, for another emotional and mental flogging.

To say the least, it wasn't fun.

For 51 years, depression told me what to think not only about myself but also the meaning of life, death and the elusive truth about value and purpose. It told me who I was, what to believe and, consequently, how to feel. A faithful tormentor, it refused to leave me alone no matter how much I pleaded and sometimes prayed to a deity I wasn't sure existed. All those years, it never tired or flagged with no regard for how tired I was.

As a three-year-old foster child, depression began wiring my brain for despair and was well underway by elementary school. Then, I didn't have a name for the sorrow and darkness which well beyond transcended sadness. During my pre-school and elementary years, my malleable brain absorbed the darkness taking it in and defined who I and the external world was.

Ever present through my teens and well into adulthood, depression didn't care how many events, accomplishments, and things I inserted into my life which should have made me happy. Its unsympathetic stranglehold had no empathy or compassion; it indiscriminately marred and ruined the happiest events of my life inevitably lurking near, stalking my every move. No matter my advanced education or how successful my career or lovely my customized dream house, no matter how many glasses of chardonnay or lovers and friends, depression wouldn't take into account my Ivy League husband or how much I loved my children. A master of despair, always, there it was.

When I tried to feel better, a haunting repeating sadness reassured me there was no way out of the darkness and pain. Years passed with no relief and 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, something terrible, was right around the corner. Intensifying was the terrifying sensation as I got older that I was at the very end of my rope dangling, swinging precariously close to piercing rocks above a bottomless black abyss. To look down would take my breath away.

To terrorize me further in the midst of all this, ceaseless was the sense that I was in an ocean-deep, dense body of water my chin just above the surface, dog-paddling like crazy so I won't go under. I am certain if I do, it will be the end of me.

Despite appearances, I passed through the decades, barely engaged in life so focused I was on my pain and fear based suffering.

By my late forties, the pain of depression was not only emotional but also physically debilitating as it had consumed not just my mind and heart but also my body. The burden of it became heavier and heavier, too heavy I thought to carry much longer. I could see no possibility of relief ahead. The physical sensations were different than they'd ever been. From my body's core, my very being, pressure was mounting. I was certain the distracting pressure would soon be uncontrollable, and I could focus on nothing else.

By year 51, I decided it was all no longer endurable. I wondered obsessively how much more pain I could take without imploding, dying from shock or killing myself as an act of intimate mercy. I became determined to end my suffering spending months online researching suicide methods, carefully considering the options. Not wanting to leave my children with the anger and hurt of knowing their mother had killed herself, I was particularly interested in methods which would make my death appear to be of natural causes or an accident.

When I finally did it, I wanted to succeed. There would be none of this "a cry for help" stuff with another stay in a psychiatric hospital. I wanted it done and finished.

Doomed to live this way with no relief, who wouldn't want to die sooner than later I reasoned. But then what? I couldn't bear to live, but I was also terrified of what came after.

The paradox of it was my hell on earth.

Despite my desire to be out of pain, I was paralyzed into inaction. Besides dooming my children, the worst thing I could imagine is a failed suicide rendering me conscious but stuck in a useless, wordless body more alone than ever trapped with emotional and mental torment forever, still not knowing what will happen when I die.

In the throes of this dilemma, a surprising foreign thought occurred seemingly out of nowhere. What if there is another way outside of all the traditional psychiatric, therapeutic and pharmaceutical "treatments" I'd endured since my teens?

I'd long before accepted what all the mental health professionals had told me about my genetically predisposed, supposedly incurable depression beginning when I was 17 when I saw my first therapist.

For 34 years, I'd been told I'm virtually powerless over my depression besides therapy and drugs which, though, gave me no power at all.

"You're biochemically imbalanced—you can't help it." The idea I was powerless was depressing in itself.

"Without psych meds, you'll never feel okay." How discouraging. "But if you take your meds, you may be able to function and be productive, perhaps even find happiness." A lifetime of just functioning. That's it?

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I'd always seen a therapist, though the faces changed, and I told the same stories over and over and over, and I wasn't better. But I should keep seeing my therapist?

"With patients genetically predisposed to depression such as yourself, the symptoms can be brought into remission, but you'll probably struggle with it the rest of your life." Sigh.

"I can't take responsibility for you if you're not compliant so you have to take what I've prescribed if you want me to be your doctor." I'd been taking those drugs for decades, still nothing. But I should keep taking them? My last psychiatrist when I told him I wasn't willing to continue taking anti-depressants was alarmed and said: "If you don't take your meds, you're playing with fire and will kill yourself." When I informed him my decision was final, he fired me as a patient.

The single thought repeated. What if? I wondered why hadn't I thought it before. Clearly, I had been conditioned to believe the trained physicians, the clinical psychologists, the licensed therapists...the experts, professionals. The thought, the beginning of a critical turning point, repeated.

Is there another way? Isn't there a cure, a real cure, something permanent? I hoped. It was a question, a thought out of the box born of desperation. Never before had I veered outside of traditional treatment protocol nor had I ever before considered there was another way. My perceived helplessness over the finality of my "illness" exacerbated the hopelessness, a hallmark

emotion of depression. The hopelessness had much to do with my belief, supported by those decades of treatment failures, that I would never, ever feel better. And I knew it was only going to get worse if I didn't find another way. I decided to dig deep, and the search was on.

As I always do when I have a question, I began to research. Into google I typed:

Alternative Treatment for Depression. Recovery from Depression. Overcoming Depression. Natural Remedies for Depression. Natural Depression Treatment. Nutritional Depression Treatment. Holistic Depression Treatment.

Among the Alternative Depression Treatment websites were links to books, videos, and blogs which appeared to have no connection to depression but were there nevertheless. Curious, I clicked on many.

I found Gary Zukav's 1979 New York Times bestseller, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, a layperson's non-mathematical explanation of quantum physics. I read it and couldn't put it down. Nothing I had ever been exposed to before made so much sense about the functioning of and behind everything. I had the intuitive sense that though I didn't know the scientific intricacies of how atoms, molecules, electrons, photons and particles work, I could understand energy. And ultimately understanding energy became key to understanding myself. This is it, I thought at the time, the elusive answer. I wanted to know more.

Digging deeper, I encountered neuroscientific data explaining how the brain works. Without exception, I'd been told that depression is an imbalance of neurochemicals, and other than drugs, there's really nothing one can do about it.

The new information I read said otherwise. Until then, what I'd been told or read, depending on whom you asked, the brain was thought to be hard-wired by a certain age, 25 to 28. During my years of mental health treatment, I was told this repeatedly concluding that one's unique, often genetically predisposed adult brain is unalterable.

Not so discovered Donald Hebb, a Canadian neuropsychologist who published a book entitled *The Organization of Behavior* in which he explained, paraphrased in 1992 for simplicity purposes by neuroscientist Siegrid Löwel, "neurons wire together if they fire {repeatedly} together" which demonstrated that how neurons fired and wired could be changed. I learned that when neurons fire and wire differently, new neural pathways are employed leading to a change in biochemistry.

So is it possible to change biochemistry without drugs? While wary of such a consideration, I had to find out.

I began to learn about neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to reorganize itself and create new neural connections.

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**"A first key principle of neuroplasticity is this:
brain activity promotes brain reorganization...
"brain workouts" help the brain reorganize connections..."**

Stephanie Liu, Stanford University

~

Whaaaaaat?

A window of awareness opened. An adult brain can be retrained? Stunned, I wondered why I had not heard about brain plasticity from any of the medical and psychological professionals who had considered me their patient.

If this is true, I thought, could my brain be trained not to be depressed? At the time, it was beyond my imagination if my brain could be trained to be happy. No or less pain would be sufficient, I thought. I kept studying. I read books, articles, and websites about the brain and studied diagrams, illustrations and brain scans which explained and demonstrated how the brain works. What if I am not depression? The consideration was calamitous. What if it's not who I am, not my inescapable dire identity? What if I don't have to "accept the diagnosis" and be dependent on psych meds for the rest of my life?

Is there hope for my condition? A tiny light flickered. All those years and all those mental health professionals who thought they were helping me, in essence, were leading me down the path to suicide when there was another way, a way to heal my brain.

But how?

What could I do now that I was considering the possibility that I didn't have to kill myself? At least not yet. I could always go back to the suicide option later. Until then, I wanted to discover what might be possible. If it is possible, I had to know how.

I opened the window wider.

What happened next, if one believes in miracles, was nothing short of one.

Through a series of random encounters (which I later knew weren't random at all), in 2012 I met an individual who self-described as an applied quantum philosopher and who also happened to be a licensed therapist. Because he already knew about quantum physics and neuroplasticity, it seemed like a good opportunity for me to explore the big questions that had haunted me since I could think consciously. The Meaning of the Universe. The purpose of My Existence. Why Am I Here. And the Biggest Cosmic Question of All, Is There An Orchestrating Intelligence Behind Everything.

In my quest to understand meaning and decide whether my suffering counted for anything, these questions had long occupied my tortured musings.

We spent the next few months exploring these questions and developing methods for changing my brain wiring, thereby changing my neural chemistry, and creating hope in me where there had never been.

Gradually, my depression faded, at first almost imperceptibly. As I learned and incorporated new understanding and beliefs, I began to consider that perhaps I am not a rattled mind full of contradictory thoughts nor a depression impaired body. Before I consciously noticed, I felt lighter. A tiny flicker of hope grew palpably in the center of my chest in the spot where I'd always held sorrow and within which depression had long staked its claim.

Hope.

It was a sensation I'd only barely before felt but which I recognized instinctively. Until those moments, I had no idea I could feel any other way. In a moment of clarity, it dawned on me that there might be a way out of the darkness, and I cried in a way I never had, a cry of relief, release and anticipation.

I was determined to heal my depression, and I did. I've titled my book *Out of the Darkness: Transforming Beyond Depression* because not only did my depression go away, it also led me into a condition of joy, contentment and peace I'd never known was possible. For that, I am abundantly, endlessly thankful.

Through my understanding of quantum physics supported by Hebb's Law integrated with ancient spiritual teachings, I effectively rewired my brain causing a chain of neurological dominoes that changed my biochemistry which resulted in the process which cured my depression once and for all.

What happened and how I cured my depression is the content of this book. To transform beyond depression takes study, discipline, focus and perseverance. It is not a job for lightweights. But don't worry. If you don't have the energy to even get out of bed, there's no reason to be discouraged. There's work ahead, but the work builds upon itself one manageable thing at a time. It can begin only with a simple thought as it did for me.

Step-by-step, building on that single beginning thought, I began to feel better. As I gradually felt better, the feeling better was enough motivation to stay on the path. And the work which felt overwhelming at first, became nearly effortless until it required no effort at all.

And now, now!

Within this book, if you stick with me, I will tell you how I not only cured my depression but also how I transformed beyond it into a life I'd never before dreamed possible. I have been depression free as I write this book for five years without anything close to or an inkling of depression. I haven't stopped marveling as I awake in the morning joyful and happy to have another day. I still can hardly believe it. I marvel when life continues to throw difficult challenges my way, but I remain unfazed. I fear not because I know I am not at risk for descending into the darkness ever again.

I'm living proof that all it takes to begin is a thought, a simple thought, and desire...an intention. Whether you believe what I tell you or not, there's no harm in clinging to a modicum of faith until you experience the healing yourself.

If you doubt it's possible to cure yourself, but you've run out of options or have found that the approaches you've previously used haven't worked, I encourage you to step into the possibility that healing is available. What have you got to lose?

In the spirit of compassion for and understanding of your suffering, I offer this book as a journey toward your healing, a path to a joy and peace beyond what you can comprehend now, a way out of the darkness.