



Joy COMES IN THE Morning

THE JOURNEY OUT OF **POST NATAL DEPRESSION**

by hayley solich

“WEEPING MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT BUT JOY COMES IN THE MORNING.” - PSALM 30:5

I had heard this phrase a thousand times, both in my childhood where I attended church with my parents and in my adult life where I made the decision to adopt a Christian lifestyle...

Do you know how hard it is to actually believe that there could ever be joy again when you are in the midst of despair, when you are affected by post-natal depression?

Trust me, it's really, really hard.

You can have faith. You can be courageous. You can be the strongest person in the world, but when despair hits your soul there is no way out of it until you really embrace the learning and understand how you got there, so you can then grasp how to heal.

I was 37 years of age, married with four children under the age of five, one a brand new baby. When I recently mentioned this to a very qualified gynaecologist they

looked me in the eye and said very seriously to me, "That's just stupid" and he really meant it. Two of my four children were in nappies and I had reached what I can only describe as my tipping point, the lowest point in my life.

I remember one day when I lost control with my oldest daughter. My husband found me on the floor of the bathroom with a bottle of pills in my hand. I felt so ashamed and devastated. I had literally vacated; sitting there, staring into space.

About to leave the house he came back inside to see me. I still wonder if I would have carried out what I was contemplating if he hadn't returned at that precise moment.

I share this painful memory because I want you to understand that even a loving, caring human being can lose control.

When the complication of post natal depression takes hold of you, your behaviour is not that of a person who is rational and has the usual resilience and coping mechanisms. It is a ghastly state of mind, where everything is negative and



one that I would not wish on my worst enemy. You seriously feel like you are living in another person's body.

“YEA THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL...” - PSALM 23:4

This scripture from the book of Psalms is one that I had also heard since I was a child, probably for the first time at my Aunt's funeral, but now it was my time to actually live my life in 'the valley of the shadow of death'. To me this is the threat of death and that threat was very real in the form of

suicidal thoughts, which I battled daily.

It was only when I was diagnosed with post-natal depression, that the realisation of why came to me. Sitting in the Psych's office at King Edward Memorial Hospital, I was handed a list of activities that people do to relax. I was asked to tick the ones that I had done in the last two weeks. As I sat there and looked at that list I couldn't see a single thing that I had done in well over three years! And the list consisted of very simple things like reading a book, taking a bath, sitting in the sunshine and walking on the beach.

Sincerely, I didn't need to see that psychologist again, because immediately I became aware of why I was feeling like I did. Fixing it, was a much longer journey.

What I realised was this... In this process

“WHAT I REALISED WAS THIS... IN THIS PROCESS OF HAVING CHILDREN I HAD LOST MYSELF COMPLETELY.”

of having children I had lost myself completely. Everywhere I went they were with me. If I went to the toilet they wanted to come too. They showered with me... yes, that's right, I had the baby in my arms and the other three at my feet every shower. Even when it was rest time in the afternoons, because I had been pregnant or breast feeding for nigh on seven years, I would line the children up across the bed and we would all have our afternoon nap together. However, when the boy came along, he was not content to settle for the nap, so I would get the girls to lie down and off to sleep and he would keep me up.

So I was literally robbed of those few precious hours of rest and time out from the demands.

Further, it felt like they had robbed me of my passions. I had been a professional performing artist and with each child my ability to do the things that I loved, like playing the piano and performing with my band, became more and more difficult. So my life had become all about serving my family with very little reward to encourage my spirit.

Finally, after seeing my doctor and confessing my suicidal thoughts, I was prescribed Zoloft to manage my depression. I took those tablets for three days only and for those three days I sat in a chair like a zombie. They removed my care factor. I could see my husband struggling, my children needing care, but I didn't care. I literally sat in that chair for three days and in that time I had an epiphany.

Before I reveal my realisations I need to give you a brief overview of my history

up to this point as I believe that you don't just get depression overnight, but it is the accumulative effect of long term struggle and stress...

- ♦ Growing up I **always felt rejected**, probably because of the abuse at home due to my father's addictions to alcohol and gambling.
- ♦ **Homeless at 17 years**, after my father kicked me out of home when I came home late after being assaulted at a pub, two months after my mother left.
- ♦ I **'found God' and embraced Christianity** as a lifestyle at 18 years.
- ♦ **I went to collège to pursue my career in the performing arts** at 22 years.
- ♦ In my first year of college, **my two grandmothers died a week apart**, I rolled my car on the freeway, I witnessed a man being hit by a car and **my mother was killed** in a car accident in December - a very traumatic year.
- ♦ I **graduated from College** and moved to Perth and started working for a Performing Arts Company at 23. What followed was a high level of success in performing arts, Christian ministry and my work as a public servant aged 23-30 years.
- ♦ I **married my husband** aged 30 years and was **pregnant within three months** of getting married.





“PART OF THE PROCESS OF GETTING BETTER WAS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I WAS THE KEY TO MY WELLNESS...IF IT WAS GOING TO BE, THEN IT WAS UP TO ME.”

♦ ***I had five pregnancies over seven years, losing one child to miscarriage.***

Our life together was fraught with pressures - financial, relational and situational, with very little social support, especially when my son was born.

♦ ***We suffered isolation*** when our business failed after our son was born and our phone was cut off. There was also a significant relationship trauma outside of our marriage when I was rejected by a leader I had sacrificially served for many years. We were put to the test many times leading up to us both being in despair at the same time aged 37 years.

So as I was sitting in that chair I was processing all of those years...all the events, the sorrows, the grief and the successes.

I had tasted what it felt like to get a standing ovation from 17,000 people when I was performing. To accept that I was now failing myself, as a person and in my role as a mother, was very difficult to acknowledge because in my head I was that successful person.

In those three days I was able to acknowledge all of it.

I realised that losing my mother had caused me to recognise that I was alone in the world, however, I had still wanted to delegate the responsibility for myself to anyone who would take it on. My husband, the leaders at my church, my friends, my in-laws...I expected others to be responsible for me, so that they could then be the ones to blame when things went pear-shaped.

Part of the process of getting better was to acknowledge that ***I was the key to my wellness.***

I remember my epiphany... the realisation that ***if it is going to be, then it is up to me.***

Ding, dong, adulthood came knocking on my door and finally, after abdicating for so many years, I opened the door and stepped into my “I am responsible for my situation” shoes and I booted the victim mentality out the door of my life!

How empowering was that moment? It might sound like the simplest, most basic understanding in life, but when you are living in a co-dependent relationship, with a huge chip on your shoulder thinking that everyone owes you something because deep down you are wounded by your childhood, acting like a martyr, you

are unable to embrace the simple logic that you are responsible for your situation and that you created it, so therefore you can fix it.

Suffice to say, following that realisation I got out of the chair.

Firstly, I made the decision to cease the medication immediately, as I had only just started it. I didn't really need it now that I knew what was wrong and how to fix it.

If you have ever been sailing you will understand the relief you feel when the air hits the sails and the boat starts to gain momentum after a long period of no wind. It's exhilarating.

I had clarity about the pathway forward and I started to put that strategy into play. We had been in financial hardship for months, as we had just started a business



and had to close it due to the baby's arrival and the lack of social support. So I got a job working for a Job Network and the change process began.

I'd like to say here that I had prayed and my situation miraculously got better. I would like to say that there were people in the church that really helped me, but apart from one or two people that I approached for support, we were well and truly cut off during this time. I realise now that was completely in keeping with God's will for us and I don't blame anyone for what happened to me. It was not because God wanted to torment us, but because he wanted me to grow up, to mature, to find my own sense of courage and resilience.

Prior to my battle with depression, my husband had a vision of me. In that vision I was going down into a dark well and I was saying over and over, “Yay though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.” I was saying it but I was saying it like I wanted to believe it, but didn't believe it. He then saw me come up out of that dark place and I was covered in gold and I was saying, “The Lord is my front and my rear guard. Whom shall I fear?”

This was my experience. I walked through the valley of the shadow of death and I feared evil but not once did I not trust that God would grant me the wisdom and the strength to come out of that valley.

“PRIOR TO MY BATTLE WITH DEPRESSION, MY HUSBAND HAD A VISION OF ME...I WAS GOING DOWN INTO A DARK WELL...”



to me...it is when we have walked through whatever trial, whatever hard experience and it has grown our capacity to have courage, to have greater understanding of life and our ability to be flexible.

I am not saying that what happened to me should be applied to every other person with post natal depression, because there are different reasons why people experience mental health issues. For some it may be hormonal or chemical; for others it is situational and for others still, it can be genetics at work. Each of these require a different solution. But for those who like me are experiencing a situational depression, you may be inspired by the steps that I took that led to my healing.

And the amazing thing was, the job that I landed, which incidentally was a real divine connection, was perfect for me because it focused me not on myself but on others and as I gave encouragement to the long term unemployed I was mentoring I started to feel encouraged myself. This is what giving does to us. It opens us to receive.

I heard a quote that Freud's assistant once said, "Give me a depressed person and in 14 days I can make them well. I'll just ask them to do something for someone else every day."

This was my experience. Not the same exhausting giving that I had poured out to my family who were unable to express their gratitude at that time, but giving to people who I saw change before my eyes when they found someone who believed in them and spoke to the potential in them.

After a very short time my depression was healed and I have never been depressed since.

Even on the days that I start to feel a little bit blue because of hormones, I am very quick to bounce back. This is resilience

- 1 **Acknowledging and accepting where I was** when I was at my lowest and seeking help
- 2 Reflecting on how I could have come to be in this place and **acknowledging that I was the key to my recovery**
- 3 **Reconnecting with the dreams** that I had before I became depressed and making a plan of how to reconnect with them so that I had something to dream about
- 4 **Establishing a routine** and knowing that there were things to look forward to doing
- 5 **Becoming more outward focused** instead of always introspective
- 6 **Getting more practical support** so I could get rest and relief from financial pressures

“THIS IS RESILIENCE TO ME...IT IS WHEN WE HAVE WALKED THROUGH WHATEVER TRIAL, WHATEVER EXPERIENCE AND IT HAS GROWN OUR CAPACITY TO HAVE COURAGE, TO HAVE GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WAY THINGS ARE AND OUR ABILITY TO BE FLEXIBLE.”

If you are someone who is struggling with post natal or other depression I understand how difficult it can be to have the motivation to take action. Simply ask yourself this question. "Is this person I see the real me?" If your answer is no, then I would encourage you to start to think about what the real you is like. I know that for me thinking about who I really was on the inside, "The I Can Woman", the successful, reliable, capable, practical, creative human being that I was created to be, really helped me to become hungry to change my circumstances.

Talking to someone who has been there may help you to know that you are not

alone and services such as LifeLine, Beyond Blue or the hospital or other medical practitioners in your world really can help you to start the process of either healing or management so you have an improved quality of life.

I am so glad that I realised that I held the keys to unlocking the door for that trapped person - the real me - to be freed and I can honestly tell you that 'joy does come in the morning'. This day will pass, but first you have to get through the 'valley of the shadow of death'. But you never walk that valley alone. God is always there with you.

♥GPM

“ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION: “IS THE PERSON I SEE, THE REAL ME?”



Hayley Solich is available to speak to women's groups, church groups, business networks and corporate groups.

Her empowering "You Can!" message has encouraged thousands around the globe. **Download her Media Kit now by clicking on the image.**