

Reviews

Journeys with the Black Dog



'These stories provide inspiration, wise counsel, and hope.'
Anne Deveson, AO, writer, broadcaster and filmmaker

'A wonderful book for anyone who has been depressed or who wants to understand depression better. It is insightful, compassionate, and invaluable.'

Kay Redfield Jamison, Professor of Psychiatry
The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

'It cuts deep and speaks to the soul as well as the intellect.'
Professor Geoff Gallop, Former Premier of Western Australia



I would like to thank you, and congratulate everyone at the Institute involved in the production. It's a beautiful book, attractive, pleasing to handle and comforting (and moving) to read. I have bookshelves in almost every room of the house, and – apart from poetry – the largest numbers on a single topic are books on depression. But these have almost always been written from the outside looking in – your book comes from the inside looking out, and that's what gives it a special resonance. It deserves a wide readership; not only among people who have experienced depression, directly or indirectly, but elsewhere as well, as a means of breaking down the malignant stigma and mystery of mental illness. These stories have a blend of emotional and intellectual honesty that beckon wisdom in a world divided by fear and intolerance. They have universal appeal. Thanks once again, & sincere best wishes - Entrant # 177



I've just finished reading *Journeys with the Black Dog* and wanted to write and express my appreciation to you for the book. Reading it has been incredibly valuable for me on many levels. Over the last six months or so I have been going through the experience of receiving and trying to come to terms with a diagnosis of depression. Receiving the diagnosis was a profound shock. Coping with my own response to this and with the responses of others who are close to me, in addition to riding the roller coaster of trialing different medications to control the condition, has been more than unsettling; it's really rocked my world and profoundly unsettled my self-confidence. Opening up to others and discussing my experiences has never been easy for me and this has been compounded by feelings of confusion, fear and, in some respects, guilt that I've been experiencing in the emotional and psychological tumult of the last few months.

I have been reading a range of materials in recent months to try and understand depression better, but I found that the stories in this book, told with such honesty, passion and often with a refreshing dose of humour, really spoke to me. It provides a range of insights into what it is like to be inside this thing we call depression which I haven't found elsewhere. These people pull no punches! Reading your book was such a relief. In reading the experience of others, I've started to feel reassured. It helps put my own experiences into some perspective; to make me think that maybe some of the things I have experienced are not just due to my own weaknesses and ineptitude but might *really* be linked to the condition. People I trust and respect keep telling me this but I can never quite bring myself to believe them! Somehow hearing it from others who have gone through these experiences really pushes me to think maybe, just maybe they're right!

I'd like to thank you for the publication, and through you, thank all the brave people who took the time to share their experiences with people like me. It's an extremely valuable book. - Jacinta



Newspaper & Bookstore Reviews:

The Sun-Herald - June 24, 2007

Reviewer *Daniel Herborn*

Compiled by UNSW's Black Dog Institute, a leading research centre focusing on depression, *Journeys* is a series of excerpts from a recent essay competition that looked at how people live with the illness. Whether dealing with their "black dog" (or that of a loved one) with stark honesty, intelligent humour or surprising insight, these anonymous correspondents make this a vital, inspiring and always practical guide. The quality, range and, sadly, sheer number of responses from sufferers is staggering. As the opening dialogue on a condition that still isn't talked about enough, it's invaluable.



The Sunday Telegraph - June 17, 2007

Textbooks and therapy are all very well but nothing helps like stories from fellow travelers. So it is with depression and this book is an excellent addition to the self-help canon, with its first-hand stories from sufferers and the family members who suffer around them. These are inspirational, upsetting, revealing and moving stories in the first person, by those who wrestle with the "black dog" of depression every day. As the editors note, working in the mental health industry means encountering humans at their worst but also at their very best – and the stories here certainly bear that out. An extremely helpful gem of a book.



The AGE- Saturday 16 June, 2007

Reviewer *Lorien Kaye*

The use of the black dog as a metaphor for depression, popularised by Winston Churchill, provides a fertile starting point for the contributors to *Journeys with the Black Dog*. But there are other recurring analogies: greyness, fog, and suffocation. The contributors, invariably all good writers, all use these metaphors to describe their own experience of depression. Their words, submitted for the Black Dog Institute's annual writing competition, are

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/media/newsdesk/index.cfm>

Last updated 11th July 2007

excerpted in themed chapters, moving from onset through diagnosis, acceptance and wellbeing strategies to “the view from the top”.

The title includes the word “journeys” to suggest there is a way through depression. The editors are way of promising quick fixes, but they do hope that the insight and wisdom of fellow sufferers will at least inspire and deepen the reader’s understanding of it.

Indeed, several contributors say that reading about others’ experiences with depression has been beneficial, so there is every reason to think that this book, about ordinary people living with depression, will be helpful.

If there is one criticism of this at once saddening and uplifting collection, it is that the reader can’t follow individual stories. Contributors are identified with numbers, so if you become intrigued by a particular writer it is difficult to find them again.



Dymocks Booksellers - www.dymocks.com.au - These autobiographical stories, written by sufferers of depression, lift the lid on this insidious and often silent disease, and chart the journey from first onset to successful management. Provides inspiring and insightful reading from people who know exactly what it means to bring the black dog to heel.



Entrants’ Reviews:

I have read *Journeys with the Black Dog*. In fact once started I had great difficulty putting the book down. I would like to congratulate you for producing a resource that I am certain will help not only those living with depression, their families and carers, but also professionals treating individuals suffering this debilitating disease. I FOUND THIS BOOK TO BE AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT RISING OVER ADVERSITY. - Entrant # 201



Journeys with the Black Dog goes to places most other books in the mental health area can't get to because it is an organised collection of written pieces by depression sufferers - the real experts on depression. In writing about living, coping with and managing their illness, there is a honesty in each presentation - whether it be a few sentences or a few pages - that provides the reader with more than information. Here you have the feelings of suffering with depression. Therefore, the ideas presented are very real and sometimes painfully honest. It's not a happy bedtime read but you will laugh out loud often and you'll marvel and you'll shake your head and you will cry. But if you can only partially match the bravery of the writers, your reward will at least be an insight you have not been party to before. For those people you know who are training the Black Dog to play dead, your enhanced understand will be a blessing. If a sufferer yourself, each page feels as if you're sitting with your best friends. Regardless of the practical benefits, this is a book about enhancing the soul. Captured in its pages, hundreds of voices are calling out, salted by their experiences and wanting to help. Will you give them a hearing?

- Entrant # 143



I have just received my copy of the latest book in the 'Black Dog' series and I am delighted with the quality of your work. Your method of incorporating our various entries into the blended text is nothing short of brilliant. You have produced a work that will be of immense value to readers and that is far greater than any of the individual contributors could have hoped to produce. Well done – and thank you. - Entrant # 187



Thank you for sending me a copy of the book *Journeys with the Black Dog*, and including a piece of my writing. I felt very proud to see my work published. More importantly, the book arrived on a day when I was feeling completely overwhelmed. My 'gift' arrived just when I needed something special, and I was able to walk all over the demons and smile on the inside. A

perfect gift, at a perfect time. Thank you. Congratulations to the editors for creating such a wonderful book. - Entrant # 261



Thank you for the delivery of *Journeys with the Black Dog*. From the book I realise that my travels with the 'dog' are not in solitude and that there are very many other fellow sufferers close and far away. Some of the accounts jell with my own experience and others not, but that is not unexpected as the 'dog' has many different guises and behaviours. I deeply appreciate the work of the 'Institute' and the delivery of the book was an unexpected but very pleasant surprise. - Entrant # 625



I have just been reading the reviews of your excellent book *Journeys with the Black Dog*, and would like to add my thanks - both for producing such a wonderful book, and also for your generosity in sending a copy to the contributors.

Like one of your other contributors says, I am also very proud to see some extracts from my story in print. I feel like an Academy Award nominee when I say that I am proud to be in a book alongside such other worthy writers, and I love it that so many people are willing to share their stories in such a moving and caring way. I laughed and I cried, and I felt so grateful to have participated in this collaboration.

I only wish that this book had been around 4 years ago when I first suffered depression. I felt very sad when I read in the introduction to Chapter 1 the words of entrant #533 who "*swam against the tide*" and said he/she is not grateful for depression, and that inspirational stories are for people who are not depressed. I know that was me 4 years ago, and I only hope that #533 can get the help needed to get them through this stage; and maybe this book will help.

I loved the fact that the last chapter was entitled "*The view from the top*" because when I went into hospital with depression my sister-in-law gave me a card, and on it she wrote "*you have a mountain to climb, but when you*

get there, the view from the top will be simply amazing". And it is!! Thanks again. - Entrant #305



Thanks so much for the book that came 'out of the blue'! Delighted to find myself in print. It certainly answers that burning question that all sufferers must ask, as I know I did initially: "*Does anyone ever recover from this?*" Believe me, it makes a big difference when you can find answers to that.
- Entrant # 59.



Thank you very much for my complimentary copy of *Journeys with the Black Dog*. I am looking forward to the range of comments and strategies people have in dealing with depression. My mother had it most of her life, and it took many years for me to discover it. With my appreciation, and good wishes - Entrant # 188



I am writing to congratulate you on the recent publication of "Journeys with the Black Dog." I have a longstanding interest in the personal/social impact of significant disturbances to mental well being, particularly where it involves the meaningful valuing of personal experience as one of the crucial voices in (mental)/health discourses.

As someone who has lived through 2 episodes of clinical depression, I commend your team for this vehicle you have provided to showcase personal stories. I would like to express my great appreciation for the work that your team does and your ongoing commitment to those whose burdens you seek to relieve. Emma



Psychologists' Reviews:

As a Clinical Psychologist working with adolescents with depression and bipolar disorder, it can be quite hard to find a good book to recommend to

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/media/newsdesk/index.cfm>

Last updated 11th July 2007

clients. Many good textbooks exist on the subject but this style of writing is not easy to read for most people and definitely not if your concentration is impaired due to a mood disorder. So finally, a collection of everyday people's descriptions of their everyday existence with depression is now available in the book *Journeys with the Black Dog: Inspirational stories of bringing depression to heel*.

The book has a nice structure making it very reader-friendly (even if you are depressed and can not read a lot at a time). The theme is that depression is like a journey where you develop depression, try and understand what is happening to you, eventually get help, receive a diagnosis, try and come to terms with this diagnosis, learn about the treatment, try the treatment and eventually learn how to cope with depression in the long run, knowing it most likely will return. There are amazing quotes and inspirational stories, however, there is still the acknowledgement of how difficult depression is when it is at its worst. Depression is not a romantic disease and one of the great things about this book is that the writers describe all the ugliness and rawness of what it is really like very vividly. There are even some point-form tips, when your depression is affecting you and you need a quick cheat sheet of how to cope. One main mantra comes through again and again which is a very helpful one for all people who are suffering from depression "This too will pass".

Books such as *Journeys with the Black Dog* help to breakdown the stigma of mood disorders. The more we read and hear about depression and bipolar disorder, the more people will become aware of what these disorders are, how to spot them in themselves and others and how to get help quicker. I believe adolescents reading this book would be able to appreciate and enjoy this great collection of personal accounts of depression. Some of the writers themselves are adolescents and many others discuss that their mood disorder commenced in their adolescent years. Our youth of today really need to be well educated in the mood disorders as they are at an age when these disorders can first occur. I am sure many adolescents with depression would appreciate if their family, teachers and concerned friends would also read this book. I will be recommending *Journeys with the Black Dog* to everyone.

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/media/newsdesk/index.cfm>

Last updated 11th July 2007

- Dr Tanya Hanstock, Senior Clinical Psychologist



Thank you so much for *Journeys with the Black Dog*. There are some spectacular passages in there. Not only myself, but I know many of my clients will be touched by the experience and wisdom in its pages. One client in particular has already been deeply touched by that book - she can now finally believe that indeed it is depression that "dogs" her, rather than "selfish laziness". Her therapy has subsequently gone to a much more effective level.

– Clinical Psychologist

