



Seeing Beyond Depression

Jean Vanier

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Depression is a painful reality, an illness that we cannot treat by ourselves. We need help to recover from it, and a friend to walk with us through the difficult times.

Jean Vanier, one of the great spiritual writers of our time, has written this simple and clear book about depression. The writing is inspirational and sympathetic as he explores how we can move beyond depression--out of the darkness into the light.

In twelve simple but profound chapters, Vanier goes right to the heart of our hurt, clarifying our feelings and offering us hope. On the left-hand page is a succinct thought that is developed in detail on the right-hand page.

Seeing Beyond Depression will appeal to:

- anyone who has known depression
- families and friends of depressed persons
- spiritual seekers
- fans of Jean Vanier

Seeing Beyond Depression Details

Date : Published December 3rd 2005 by Paulist Press (first published 1999)

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Author : Jean Vanier

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From Reader Review Seeing Beyond Depression for online ebook

Jane says

best to read in 2 parts. On one side of the page are helpful quotations; on the other some helpful info. Helpful book and uplifting but places too much emphasis on depression being linked to childhood trauma rather than life events. I would give this between 2 and 3 stars.

Liz Cloos says

Nice and easy read. Many points worthy of reflection.

Jonathan says

As someone who experienced periods of chronic depression, Jean Vanier understood my condition better than anyone else I've ever read.

Marco Perez says

The kindle version is weird

The book seems kind of choppy. The page numbering is off, and given that the writings is already discombobulated, it does leave the reader with much confidence that they didn't skip a page. I have Becoming Human, I'll give that a go next. This book is helpful and it could lead to great discoveries for those that know very little about depression and true self.

Melissa Monette says

This book is wonderful. I highly suggest people read this with an open mind and with the desire for change or the desire to understand what people go through while experiencing depression.

Elizabeth says

It reads prettily (though I found the pull-quotes on facing pages distracting), but it feels disconnected -- both as a whole, and also disconnected from my experiences (albeit second-hand) of severe, chronic depression.

The opening vignettes are about grief, and leaving aside the fact that the formatting often makes it difficult to distinguish blockquote from maintext, I'm really not interested in pages about grief as a way to ramp into,

"And some people have a biological disposition to have much greater difficulty recovering from emotional hurt" -- though I recognize that that's probably a helpful framing for a lot of people.

The author states that "Depression [...] has its origins in the wounds of our childhood that we have never wanted to own or to name" (15). The chapter makes sense, and I appreciate that it's immediately followed by a chapter titled "Chemical Changes in the Body," though that chapter basically doesn't say anything beyond "In many ways, biology and psychology are ONE, because the human being is ONE. Some people have a biological predisposition to depression inherited from their parents" (27), which is fine, but I would like a *little* bit more (and yes, I feel the irony, given that I've found the ~medical chapters in recent books I've read a bit excessive).

I'm not really sure what to say about the rest of the book. The chapter titles say most of it for me:

5. The Winters of Life Prepare the Way for Springtime
6. You Are Part of a Beautiful Universe
7. The Deepest Person Within Each One of Us
8. Struggling Against the Powers of Death
9. Knowing How to Rest
10. Going Down Into the Darkness
11. Depression: A Crisis Which Can Set Us Free
12. Getting Out of Depression

It reads prettily, but I come away from it with a sense of, "Depression is a dark season, and if you love someone who's depressed, love them as they are and let them emerge at their own pace, and if you are depressed, recognize that you are not alone, help is out there, and as you find trustworthy people to listen to you and possibly medication, as you learn how to recognize the deepest self within you, who is connected to the beautiful universe, as you find ways to be strengthened and uplifted by the beauty of nature, as you move through the darkness to emerge on the other side, you will find healing, and you will also have increased empathy for other people who are in pain." None of which is necessarily untrue, but.. I think it's partly the sense I get of "Depression is a dark season -- which can/will pass." The author does mention in the last chapter that some people may have to continue to take medication, may have to be hospitalized again, etc., but I still felt like the norm was that while you might always be somewhat fragile, severe bouts of depression are distinct phases -- which feels to me like an oversimplification of many people's experiences of chronic, severe depression (which may not be the kind of depression Vanier particularly has in mind, of course, which is its own problem).

Jackie G says

Very simple but practical advice about the roots of depression and the things individuals can do to heal and emerge from depression.

Alison says

As someone who has experienced chronic depression I found this book one of the most gentle and encouraging reads. On one hand it could be read as very simplistic, but the truths and lessons are profound

and important. A beautiful book to recommend to someone struggling with the illness.

Peter says

Jean Vanier understands the human heart and soul better than most people I have met or read. There is wisdom in this book but all of it won't apply to everyone in every situation but anybody who has to deal with depression first or second hand will find at least some benefit from this book.

Richard says

This is a good, quick read about depression. Its an encouraging little book for people who suffer from depression. Its also helpful if you've got a friend struggling with this, because it can help you better understand how to love a friend through depression.
