

# *Finding Myself through Adversity*



*by Sharon Fawcett*  
author of  
*Hope for Wholeness:  
The Spiritual Path  
to Freedom from Depression*

**A**lbert Einstein said, “Adversity introduces a man to himself.” That sounds productive and hopeful. Could something we instinctively avoid, dread, and perhaps even fear possibly have a good purpose? I’ve learned through my own season of suffering that *it can*. This idea that adversity can serve an important role by revealing things we might otherwise never realize about ourselves has been proven in my life. A long period of deep despondency became my impetus for discovery and growth.

For as long as I can remember I tried hard to win people’s approval. In school, I tried to be the best student I could possibly be. In general, I tried to live an exemplary life—attempting to avoid vices and bad habits (but not always succeeding).

I shied away from conflict.

I indulged others’ wishes.

I felt I could never say “no” to a request from anyone to do anything, so my life was always overflowing with extra activities.

Although I made a choice to invite Christ into my life as a young child, I had essentially run ahead of Him from that point on, failing to seek Him, hear Him, or desire time with Him. It was the world’s approval I hungered for, even at church.

At the age of twenty-six I was teaching a Sunday school class of teenagers and directing the children’s choir at my church. I sang in the adult choir, was a soloist as well, and served on the music committee. I felt I had to be present whenever the doors were open; you could find me in worship services twice on Sunday and at mid-week prayer meeting. It was an exhaustingly busy life, especially while trying to care for a three year-old and a newborn.

Then suddenly, the hyperactivity came to an abrupt end.

I began to feel very sad all the time, and then numb. Instead of looking forward to each new day, I dreaded waking up. I was no longer interested in the activities I once enjoyed, or that once defined

me. Craving solitude and silence, I withdrew into myself. I didn't want to see anyone, talk to anyone, or "serve" anyone. I just wanted to sleep—eternally, if possible.

After a visit to my family doctor in which I described my alarming desire for death, I was referred to a psychiatrist, diagnosed with major clinical depression, and admitted to a hospital psychiatric ward for the first time. There, I also developed the life-threatening eating disorder anorexia nervosa. After three years of treatment I overcame anorexia, but the depression remained.

During my nine-year journey with depression I accepted every form of treatment offered to me, including twenty different psychiatric medications, approximately 100 electroconvulsive treatments, and numerous forms of psychological therapy. I spent 80 weeks as a patient in hospital psychiatric wards, and survived one suicide attempt.

*Women  
of faith  
...  
making  
a difference  
where you are*

I know my psychiatrist did everything she had been trained to do to help me and I received excellent medical care, but my depression was relentless. So, during year nine I decided to take my pastor's advice and seek Christian counselling.

After exploring the potential spiritual roots of my depression with my new counsellor, I gained freedom from it at last—three months after my first counselling session. I never returned to the psychiatric ward, never had another electroconvulsive treatment, and no longer needed medication or the care of a psychiatrist.

Although I had overcome depression, there were still issues I needed to understand and address to ensure I remained free, so I continued in counselling for two more years. In that time I learned much about myself and discovered many lies I'd believed most of my life—which directed my behaviour—including the lie, *I'm not good enough*.

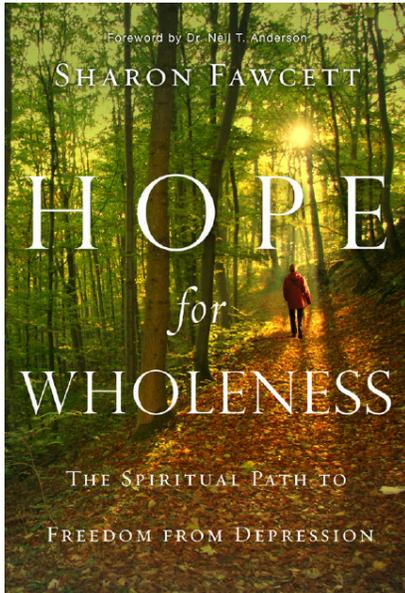
This was the subconscious belief that made me a people-pleaser and a workaholic, caused me to put everyone else's wishes above my needs, and kept me so busy attempting to earn others' approval, I had no time to spend on the relationship with the One who could nourish, strengthen, and complete me.

**Through counselling I was able to receive God's truth to replace that lie, and it was life-changing: I was enough because I was His. I would never have made these revelations, or reached out for much-needed spiritual healing, were it not for the motivation provided by depression.**

My journey with depression was the greatest period of adversity I have experienced in my life thus far. It stole much from my family and me, but it also gave me more than I believed was possible. Adversity introduced me to the person God knew me to be, someone who was loved and accepted just the way she was and did not have to prove her worth to anyone. Adversity introduced me to the fact that I was living life for the wrong purpose, trying to please others while ignoring my

own needs. Adversity introduced me to my innate longing for a life-giving relationship with God, which was not possible without an investment of my time.

Sixteen years have passed since I gained freedom from depression—a freedom I’ve maintained. There are still times, however, when I find myself beginning to tip-toe towards those unhealthy practices that caused me so much grief in the past. A reminder of the suffering I experienced provides the motivation to address this behaviour, and remember who adversity introduced me to.



Sharon Fawcett lives with her husband, Tim, in Petitcodiac, New Brunswick.

She is the author of *Hope for Wholeness: The Spiritual Path to Freedom from Depression*. Following her book’s publication, Sharon took time to pursue some long-buried passions, returning to university to study human rights and international development, earning undergraduate and graduate degrees.

In her spare time, Sharon enjoys cycling, nature, and spending time with her grown daughters.

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