

You Mean I Can Lift the Depression and Connect with my Soul?

By Johanna Vanderpol

I didn't know I was depressed. I just thought that was the way life was. Drab, boring, dull. And, when an event or person did come along that excited me, I wasn't allowed. Wasn't allowed to see that person, or wasn't allowed to go. There was always some reason that something good wasn't allowed.

All through my childhood years and teen years, I felt alone. I also felt misunderstood and felt that my parents didn't listen to me and what I thought, felt or wanted wasn't important. My teacher even commented on my report card that I looked pale.

In my teen years, I couldn't wait to move out of my parent's house. The atmosphere was oppressive. Nothing I could do or say was right, ever. There was nothing good about me and I was not to be trusted. I was too young to know better and then all of a sudden old enough to know better. That's what they said. How was I supposed to get from 'too young to know better' to 'you should have known better' with no skills taught to me in between? What an impossible expectation! But I didn't realize that it was an impossible expectation at the time. These were the kinds of messages I received about myself. So where was I supposed to gather the skills to make this transition to one of sound decisions that would make a good life for myself? - by magic, I suppose.

The outside world treated me better; it was more understanding. I thought if I left home, everything would then be OK. And it was, at first.

But, then, after I left home, I noticed I was still suffering. People seemed to know better than I. They seemed more self confident, happier, with less problems than I. I felt insecure around them.

I felt like everyone else was better than me. Then I had a boyfriend. I got married. I was unsatisfied. We split up. I started group therapy when I was fifteen. I had a psychiatrist when I was 19. I was unhappy being single, and lonely. I entered a second and third marriage that didn't work. I started projects but lost interest in them. I tried everything, read everything. What was going on here?

Then I discovered what was going on. I was depressed. But why?

Through a psychotherapist, I discovered how my parents' attitude towards me made me feel inadequate as a human being. I discovered how I internalized those messages and continued to feed them to myself and attract people and situations that reinforced those beliefs. Through a friend, I discovered by her loving feedback the parts of me that were beautiful. Through spirituality, I discovered a belief that all human beings were beautiful beings, each unique in their qualities, including me. And the final piece, through a study of emotions through a recently emerging field of emotional intelligence, I discovered a key: that emotions, pleasant and unpleasant were ok. They were more than ok. They were a part of me that were designed as a guidance system to discover my soul. They allowed me to connect with what my soul really wanted.

When I started to allow myself to understand how my past had impacted me, when I started to realize how beautiful I *really* was and when I started to see my emotions as a guide to my soul, my depression lifted.

Self awareness, a new belief about myself and emotions as a guide to my life (instead of another thing about myself to be negatively judged) was the path that created a permanent change, a paradigm shift! It took a lot of trial and error to find the elements needed and steady work to incorporate those elements into my life, but it was worth it!

At first it was for a few days at a time, then for a few weeks at a time, then for a few months at a time. And now, the tables are reversed. Instead of being depressed 60 to 80 percent of the time, it became 10 to 20 percent of the time.

Now, when depression starts to tug at me, I recognize it. I can see the flaws in my thinking. I can take it as a guide that I have not been loving and honouring myself and can take steps to find what is necessary to be as kind to me as a loving and compassionate parent would be to a young child who has just fallen down and scraped their knee.

I have been depression-free for more than one year now. It is the first time in my 46 years on this planet that I have had the ability to remain standing and moving along without getting depressed, in spite of life's challenges! Before, I had never gone more than six weeks without getting depressed. I can 'feel' that the debilitating depression is now behind me. I know what I need to do when depression tugs at me and I have repeatedly and successfully been able to do so.

I have learned to see myself as a valuable human being.

I have learned to honour myself, my emotions and my soul.

When I follow the promptings of my soul, I am happy. I am doing the things that feed my spirit and I am doing things that contribute to the happiness of others.

I am dancing. I am writing. I am listening to music. I am enjoying rock climbing and hiking. I am teaching other people to honour their feelings and to use them as their guide to their well-being through speaking, courses, articles and coaching.

What is next for me?

The book that needs to be written, so that other people can start following the messages of their own emotions without negative self-judgment that keeps them small and unhappy, so that other people can treat themselves with permission to feel ok about their feelings, to treat themselves

with compassion and to recognize their unique greatness.

What does your soul want to do?...

Give yourself the permission to explore this question without limitations and use your emotions as a guide. Discover their message.

What does your soul want to do?...

For more information and to order the book *Honouring Your Emotions: Why it Matters* contact Johanna at 250-483-1877 or at info@johannavanderpol.com. Be sure to visit her website at www.johannavanderpol.com.

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