

Depression; Sucks

How to turn the Depression Demon
into a Creature of Beauty



Fiona Tate

Depression Fucking Sucks

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Depression Fucking Sucks: How to turn the Depression Demon into a creature of fucking beauty

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INTRODUCTION:

First of all, I'd like to say that if the title of this book offends you in any way, please put the book down. Fuck is a big word and although I use it a lot, I don't use it lightly. Depression is another big word that I use a lot and that I don't use lightly. Despite the tone of this book, I take Depression extremely seriously. Both my own and other people's. But I also use humour as a coping mechanism. And when I say humour? It's usually sarcastic humour. It's how I (and many others) cope.

They say that one in five people will experience Depression in some form within their lifetime. I believe the figure is higher than that. I also believe that the global suicide rate is disgusting, unnecessary and should be fucking stopped! If more people talked out loud about Depression, suicide, and other mental illness, then perhaps there'd be a lot less discrimination and a lot less death in the world. Nobody should ever think that being dead is their best option, whether they're ill or not.

But I'm talking about an ideal world, aren't I? Maybe. But why can't an ideal world be one we strive for anyway, no matter what our chances of succeeding are.

I also believe that one of the reasons the suicide rate is so high is because people aren't able to express themselves freely, without judgement, without ridicule, and without fear. I believe the differences in people should be celebrated, not just tolerated and should certainly not be a reason, ever, to hurt another human being.

This book exists as my attempt to leave this world in a slightly better condition than I entered it. I want people to know that Depression doesn't have to be fatal. I want the people who are familiar with the demon Depression to know that this thing that makes them "different" also gives them an insight that other people don't ever get a chance to develop. And yes, I do know what I'm talking about, I've had consistent Depression since childhood. I have paid my dues.

But I also want people who have never experienced Depression to understand that it's an illness, not a choice. The only choice we have with

Depression is how we manage it and even that choice is often taken away from us. So, please, feel free to share this tome with anyone who doesn't have Depression but wants to understand. We have a duty to educate as many people as we are able.

Finally, I wrote this book for me. It's one of the many creative things I've done, that's been fuelled by my Depression. I love to write. For a long time, I had forgotten that I love to write. I've never felt that I can make myself understood in normal conversation, but I can when I write. My tongue doesn't get tied up in knots, I know all the right words and how to use them and I feel far more free than I ever do when I'm having a conversation. And yes, unsurprisingly, I've had many a Doctor tell me that I shouldn't isolate myself and should go out and talk to people.

Nope. Don't wanna. Not gonna. And you can't make me. (They really can't.) I will continue to write, when and if I feel the need to. It's how I create, it's how I teach, and it's how I would happily spend every waking moment if I could. Yes, happily. Even with consistent Clinical Depression.

I sincerely hope that somewhere in these pages, you find the key to your own creativity, the key to slaying your Depression Demon.

CHAPTER ONE

Depression fucking sucks. But then I probably don't have to tell you that. If you've picked up this book, you probably already have a good idea about how shitty Depression is. Feel free to gloss over this chapter if you want.

We're going to take a brief look at Depression. (I use a capital D because Depression is not a lower-case condition). We'll look at what it is, what it isn't, and what causes it. Hopefully, this first chapter will be something you can use to show people who don't understand what Depression is. You know the type. The ones that tell you to "cheer up, it ain't all bad." Or "Oh yeah, I've been depressed before, but I just picked myself up and got on with things." Or those complete arseholes who say "Can't you just decide to be happy?"

The easiest way to explain what Depression is, is to explain what it isn't. It's not feeling sad, having the blues, or feeling a bit low. It's not something you can snap out of, choose to get over, or manage with a positive attitude and exercise.

Depression is not something you need to recover from.

In my opinion, anyway. But, more of that later.

Depression is a bottomless pit of emptiness. It's a conviction that you are worthless, and that the world would be better off without you. It's a sense of not being a real person. A knowledge that there's something dreadfully wrong with you and that's why you're not like everybody else. It's the certainty that your Depression is different, your symptoms won't go away, your trauma is unsurmountable.

It's an inability to focus, a loss of memory, a sense of imbalance. It's paranoia. No, it's not paranoia, it's *true* that everybody hates you. It's the belief that you're not good enough, not pretty enough, not smart enough, not motivated enough, not human enough, not real enough.

It's an inability to make decisions, a loss of appetite, an increase in appetite, a lack of sleep, too much sleep. It's a chemical imbalance in the brain, a

karmic consequence, a reaction to trauma, a genetic thing.

How am I doing so far? I could go on, but you're probably as bored with this part as I am.

The bible of mental health, the DSM-5 uses the following as its diagnostic criteria for Depression:

- Depressed mood for most, if not all, day and for most days of the week.
- Noticeable loss of interest or lack of pleasure in almost all, previously enjoyable activities, nearly every day.
- Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.
- Extreme fatigue or lack of energy, most days.
- Slow thinking and slowness of physical movement which is noticeable by other people.
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or excessive shame almost every day.
- Lack of concentration and indecisiveness almost every day.
- Recurrent suicidal ideation without a plan, or thoughts of dying.
- Recurrent suicidal ideation with a plan.
- Suicide attempt(s).
- Depressed mood with mixed features including manic episodes.
- Depressed mood with anxious distress.

But wait...there's more. These symptoms must happen often enough and severely enough to impede your ability to participate in social, vocational, or what is considered "normal" functioning. They also can't be a result of alcohol or drug use. Although both of these often come along with Depression.

You also need to experience five or more of the symptoms within a 2-week period and one of those symptoms must be a depressed mood, or a loss of interest or pleasure.

What Causes the Demon that is Depression?

You might want to pour yourself a cuppa for this one, it could take a while.

There's a whole shit-ton of reasons why you might get depressed and despite what Great-Aunt Matilda says, not one of those causes is because you're weak. According to Harvard Health Publishing, here's just a few:

- Faulty mood regulation by the brain (chemical imbalance)
- Stressful life events and trauma
- Genes
- Certain medications
- Physical and medical problems

Keep in mind that all this is only educated guessing. The people that study such things cannot definitively say what causes clinical Depression. Some of the most recent studies have found that people who have Depression often have slightly smaller hippocampus' than other people. But I'm sure if you looked hard enough, you could find another study that says the exact opposite.

And yes, some people with Depression have lower Serotonin levels than others. But not all. If your mother has Depression you may be at higher risk of developing it yourself. But you may not ever get it. Many older people are being diagnosed with Depression nowadays, but let's face it, if everyone around you is dying, you have all kinds of physical and medical problems and you're bored out of your mind, wouldn't you be depressed?

You may be able to pinpoint what's caused your Depression and you may not. I always thought I knew the reasons for my Depression until I had an episode (and one of the worst episodes I've ever had) when everything was going well for me.

And really, what does it matter? For many people, myself included, the cause of an episode is irrelevant. It is what it is. What matters is how the demon Depression gets dealt to. (You'll notice I didn't say *dealt with*). That's because I take a Depressive episode as a personal affront and tend to want to stab it in the neck.

Whatever the cause, whatever the reason, be it scientific, situational, or grief-related, there are very few things in this world that are as soul-destroying as the demon that calls itself Depression. It's a very difficult thing to describe to someone who's never experienced it because it's so difficult

to state what a “lack of” is. And Depression is a lack of everything. It’s all gone and you’re never sure if you will find it again.

Let me reassure you, you will. But it won’t be easy.

CHAPTER TWO

Let's talk about recovery. Actually, you know what? Let's fucking not.

I don't believe in recovery. Recovery means "return to normal." Right. Go on, then. Tell me what "normal" is. Because I don't believe for one second that it's what the Psychiatrist's textbooks say it is.

Normal is one of those nothing words. It's a concept made up by judgemental people who wanted everyone else to toe the line so that they could control them. Does that sound conspiratorial?

It should do. Normal is nothing and who wants to be nothing?

Recovery is the same. It means nothing. If you're *in recovery*, it means that you've stopped doing whatever it was that was doing you harm. Alcohol, drugs, eyeball licking, whatever. It means that you've got rid of whatever the problem was.

I don't believe that you need to *get rid of* Depression. I've just turned 50 and although I wouldn't wish Depression on anyone, it's made me who I am, and I quite like who I am now (finally). Why would I want to get rid of who I am? Don't get me wrong, I don't like being miserable, not sleeping, forgetting everything and generally beating myself up, but I don't want to be the less empathetic, more judgemental and more self-absorbed person that I believe I would be if I didn't have the experience of lifelong depression either.

Look at the (very few) people who experience huge trauma in their lives but never develop persistent clinical Depression. Do they try to get rid of how they feel? No. They work through it. Slowly, painfully, and with a lot of help, they work through it. And many times, they turn their trauma into a worthy cause, use it fuel a new career, or educate others.

In a perfect world, there would be no Depression. No trauma, and no suicide. And I firmly believe that if we build a world where people can share their emotions, their quirks, their weirdness without fear of being persecuted or mocked, we would build a world without Depression. Or at

least, vastly reduced rates of suicide and Depression. But right now, this world is the only one we've got, and we need to make the most of it.

Okay. This chapter was meant to be about treatments and ways of managing Depression, but I seemed to have wandered off track so let's get back to the task at hand.

Treating the Demon Depression

Medication

The first time I was diagnosed with Depression (back in my early 20's) they put me on medication. I can't remember what the medication was, but I do remember that every time I blinked, I fell asleep. I also remember my eyesight being blurry, a feeling of surrealism and disassociation, and a strong sense that I wasn't part of the world anymore. I didn't take those pills for too long, I preferred the Depressive symptoms rather than the so-called cure.

The medication has improved since then, the invention of Prozac has made sure of that. Now, I love Prozac, it has absolutely worked wonders for me with no side effects at all. I love the stuff. However, I also know several people, who become suicidal within days of taking it. Which just goes to show how wide-ranging the causes, effects, and symptoms of Depression can be.

It's taken me a long time to come to terms with the fact that my life is unbearable without anti-depressants. And even now, I sometimes forget, come off them, and then get quite violently reminded of why I need them. But medication is still my last resort. That shit's a necessary evil for me and if taking it keeps me sane, well...alright then.

But the thing to remember with medication is, there's always another option. Don't put up with side effects that make you feel worse or go on for longer than 3 weeks. Go back to the Doctor and try something else. And if your Doctor won't prescribe anything else, go to another Doctor. Make sure you've got one who knows their stuff when it comes to Depression, not just one who got an A on his Psychology 101 paper. You need a Doctor who is

open to other treatments, knows the difference between the types of anti-depressant medication, and one that gives a shit about you, not just about his pay packet.

Talking therapies

Again, the trick with this is to make sure you get a good one. Do your research, get recommendations and don't be afraid to switch if you find your current therapist isn't working out for you. Remember that you have choices. Even if the counselling is free, you can still switch to someone you like better. You must trust your therapist and you must agree with the way they work. In my opinion, you also must be able to sit quietly with them and not have to talk. Comfortable silences are often necessary.

Don't forget that there's value in talking to friends and family about how you feel and what you're going through. But...and it's a big but...that isn't counselling, and it isn't therapy. Your friends and family can't be objective. They care about you and they want to see you well, but they probably have their own shit going on as well. People want to help, even if you need to talk about the same old stuff you've already talked about 100 times before. So, let them, but don't expect them to be able to provide anything other than love or sympathy. Sometimes they can't even manage empathy.

Natural therapies

I'm a big fan of natural therapies, aromatherapy, in particular. Herbs, Reiki, Crystal healing, color therapy, I'm a big fan of all of them. I'm currently learning more about which foods create which mood in me and of course, as a Witch, I use spells, potions, and candle therapy.

But you will never hear me say that you should replace medical therapies with natural therapies. I don't believe that there's one answer for everything or everybody, I believe each individual should find the mix that works best for them. And I believe that unless you're harming someone else with your ideas of the correct treatment for Depression, I'm not going to tell you that you shouldn't do whatever works for you.

The problem is with any therapy though, is it's really a matter of trial and error. You don't know what's going to work and what isn't until you try them. For me, the treatment that works best right now (because it has changed at different times of my life) is a mixture of anti-depressant medication, essential oils, diet, and a whole heap of self-care stuff.

Spirituality

Every serious discussion about Depression and treatments needs to cover the topic of spirituality. You'll notice I didn't say religion, I said spirituality. I'm a witch and therefore I consider myself to be a very spiritual person, but I do not follow any religion. In my witchcraft practice, I work with Lilith and The Morrigan, but again, I do not follow any religion. For some, spirituality is religion, for some spirituality is self-care, or spending time in nature. And I think it must be said that in some cases fandom is providing people with the sense of connection that spirituality used to provide.

But with spirituality, comes a warning: For fucks sake be careful about what you get into. Make sure that your ideas and beliefs around spirituality are formed when you are 100% well. The middle of a depressive episode is not the time to start listening to sermons from that bearded guy in the purple robe. If you're at all susceptible to a con when you're not well (and who isn't?) make sure that you have a plan in place and that someone knows how to drag you out of any holes you may fall into.

CHAPTER THREE

Well. I suppose it's time I told you about my experience with the demon Depression. Feel free to skip over this chapter if you're in a hurry to get to the good stuff about how to turn your Depression into a creature of fucking beauty. I haven't forgotten I promised to do that, and I always keep my promises.

If you're still with me, here's the edited version of my life story (yes, the demon has been with me that long.) I'll try not to bore you too much.

Dad died when I was six, so I guess that was probably the start of it. In later years, I was told by a clairvoyant that the Angels visited me to prepare me for my father's death but in actual fact, it didn't help at all. I don't remember any Angels visiting, but I do remember my imaginary friend, Girl, that I had long before he passed. (Not a very original name, I know.) Anyhoo, it was a heart attack that killed him, his second one, and he was 35 years old.

When I was about 9 years old, I started having weird stomach pains that the Doctors couldn't find a reason for. My GP told my mother they were psychosomatic. Of course, now we know that pain without evident cause is a symptom of childhood depression. But back then, all we knew was that Fiona had an active imagination and was always so overemotional. I just remember feeling miserable and lonely a lot of the time and just wanting to be left alone to live in my books and the stories I made up in my head. I hit puberty when I was around 10 years old, so you can imagine the problems that caused and there some problematic relationships in my life, blah blah blah. We all have our stories, each as relevant as each other's.

The joys of youthful partying

The heavy drinking started when I was around 16 years old, so it's difficult to know how seriously the demon Depression was affecting me then as I was either drunk, planning to be drunk, or hungover. Isn't it wonderful being young and able to party 24/7? There were some horrible men in my

life that I won't bore you with, a miscarriage at 17, the conception of that baby is something I still don't like to talk about.

There were more parties, lots of unemployment, more parties, and more horrible men. One day, when I was in my early twenties, I started crying. I can't remember why I started crying, but I do remember I couldn't stop. It wasn't until mother made me promise to go to a Doctor that I was first diagnosed with Depression. I remember assuming it was probably just a one-off and once I recovered, I'd never get depressed again. Aah, the ignorance of youth.

I've already told you about those nasty anti-depressants, but I didn't mention that the counsellor they sent me to then was crap as well. She simply wasn't interested in what I had to say, and it was a long time before I decided to try a counsellor again. I was on and off anti-depressants right up until about my mid-30's when I finally realized that my life was a whole lot better when I just stayed on the damn things. So, I did, and life slowly began to get better.

In the 1980's, deinstitutionalization of mental health facilities in New Zealand occurred and I, almost by accident, applied for a job as mental health support worker. Back then they didn't care about your qualifications (I had none) they wanted to know about your life experience and your empathy for the people you were working with.

I still remember how I felt when I got that job. That was really the turning point for me and I'll forever be grateful to the guy who took a chance on me and gave me that job. I worked in a group home with 12 residents who had been released from long-term Psychiatric care and I loved it. Really and truly loved it. These people had diagnoses such as Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder and they were considered to be "the incurables." I was also lucky enough to work with a fantastic staff of all ages, experiences, and talents and I learned so much from all of them.

One of the things I had to do with that job was go to Polytechnic for a year and get my National Certificate in Mental Health Support Work. Damn, I loved that too. I'd forgotten how much I loved to learn new things. Once I'd completed that, I just kept going and spent the next five years getting a

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology while working full-time as a mental health support worker.

I got married when I was 42 years old, to a guy I'd known forever, but had been with for around four years. We're still holding it together but wow, this marriage shit is hard, isn't it? Life with the Count has been eventful, shall we say, with the most dramatic event probably being the 2011 earthquakes in Christchurch. At the time, we were living in the city and were both working in the CBD when the quakes hit. And the aftershocks that went on forever. I thought I handled that quite well really, it took about another four years after that before I needed to get my medication increased. And yes, it's left me with some shit I'll never get rid of, but hey, I'm alive!

The other traumatic (and I don't use that word lightly) event would have to be when I finally faced up to the fact that I was never going to be a mother. I'm childless by circumstance, not by choice, and the pain of that is immeasurable. I'd always wanted to be a mother and I couldn't figure out why I couldn't be. I won't go into that any further here but if you're interested, you can check out more of that story at countessdrusillasteele.com

So that brings me up to now

Oh, maybe I should mention I had a heart attack earlier this year. Again, I think I handled that quite well really. In my case it was more of a relief that was over and done with. Dad had his first heart attack when he was 28 years old so the fact that I made it to 49 until I had one, is pretty good going. Just in case though, I went and had me a little counselling session as a pre-emptive strike against the demon. I had another emergency admission to hospital a couple of months after that with cellulitis and that was worse than the heart attack!

And there's weight issues that get me down occasionally but that's a whole other book. And menopause. Oh my Goddess, don't get me started on the menopause! You know, the more I think about it, the more I realize just how badly 2019 sucked!

But...I ain't depressed, baby! I've even dropped my anti-depressant medication slightly. And that my friends, is down to good management not good luck. I work very hard to keep myself well. I take my medication, I use my essential oils, I get enough sleep, I stay away from people who damage my calm (Oh yeah, the Whedonverse is part of my self-care routine), I monitor my emotions and health every single day. And I expect to continue doing that for the rest of my life. Considering the alternative, I'm okay with that.

CHAPTER FOUR

It was while I was learning to cope with my childlessness that I discovered how to turn Depression into a Creature of Fucking Beauty (CFB) rather than the Demon of Eternal Damage. Like most of the best discoveries, it happened seemingly by accident, but with a grander purpose that I didn't understand at the time.

There's a huge difference between Depression and grief even though the symptoms often look the same. That's another stigma that people with mental illness must cope with. We're not allowed to have normal emotions. We can't be upset, we're taking medication for that, aren't we?

When I exhausted my last slim chance to become a parent, I was miserable and desperately unhappy. And yes, a bit angry as well. I was completely defeated, and I figured I had two options: I could drink myself to death or I could find something else to feel passionate about. I knew if I didn't make the decision to live and then actively find a way to carry on, then I would just drink until the Depression took over and I could will myself to die.

Incidentally: Not everyone who is depressed is suicidal. I've been suicidal and honestly, I think it was more alcohol related than anything else. I've been extremely lucky with my Depression in that when I'm in the middle of an episode, I don't have the energy to kill myself. I can't make that decision, then decide how to do it, when to do it, etc. My brain just won't allow me to make all those decisions.

For me, it was an actual decision, whether or not to survive the pain of involuntary childlessness and I know I spent a few days making it. In the end, I surprised myself by deciding to live. I'd been through too much, taken to many anti-depressants and seen too many counsellors to let all that learning, and life experience, go to waste by dying. I had to pass on what I'd learned over the years to whoever needed it, just like I would have passed it on to my kids. But once I decided I was going to live, I had to figure out how the hell I was going to manage it.

I started by asking myself, "What would I tell my client's to do?" After twenty or so year's working in mental health that was easy to answer: I

would tell them to write it out. While that seemed like a good idea and I knew plenty of clients who had found it helpful, I didn't think I could bring myself to write about it yet. So instead, I decided to write a novel.

A brief side trip

We're going to take a wee side trip here to explain why I decided to write the kind of novel that I did. See, I love Vampires. Always have. And I've loved them long before they became fashionable again this time round. (These things are always cyclical). And just so we're clear: VAMPIRES DO NOT SPARKLE. Sigh...Also, Dracula will always be Bela Lugosi to me, with Gary Oldman being a close second. Anyhoo, when I was a kid my exposure to vampires was limited to the Sunday night Horrors on tv and all those Hammer movies. The only book I could find that was halfway decent was Bram Stoker's Dracula and I would always much rather read a book than watch a movie. So, at a young age, I swore that when I grew up, I would write a Vampire novel that I would actually want to read.

So, that's what I did. I finally started to write my debut vampire novel. (Nope, don't waste your time looking for it, I'm about halfway through the second draft, but I'm getting there) Since I was very young, I loved to write. I bugged Mum until she taught me how to read and write, and I couldn't wait to go to school. The first piece I remember writing was something I did when my Dad died. I wrote down a few facts about him and his life and carried it around with me for a while. I'm not sure why I did that, perhaps I was frightened I was going to forget him, or maybe I wanted some evidence that he had in fact, existed.

Back to the book

Now, when I say it's a vampire novel, what I mean is, it has vampires in it. But really, the book is about childless women. Childless by choice, childless not by choice, childless by the death of a child women, to be precise. And it's about the relationships between these women, and the consequences of the choices they make and the choices that are made for them. But yes, there are some gruesome blood-thirsty vampires in there. And a mad

Scotsman. And let me tell you, there is something hugely cathartic about writing a really gory death scene! I highly recommend it.

Without a word of a lie, I can say that writing saved my life. I'd forgotten how much I loved it until I started doing it again. By the time I was a third of the way through the first draft, I had the next two books planned out in my head. The sheer joy of putting words on a bit of paper, or a screen, gave me a passion and a purpose that nothing else had done before. I could, and did, pour everything I'd learned over the years into that book. I poured all my anger at how my life had turned out and all the things and people I'd lost. I can express myself by writing in a way that I just can't do when I'm speaking. My words often come out all wrong, I'm too loud or too quiet, I can't find the right words to say what I mean, I can't find the right tone of voice.

But I can write. I can write my feelings, I can describe things clearly, I can make people laugh. And my introverted, depressed, self can do it without becoming exhausted. I can write for hours on end. And by fuck, I've got some stories to tell.

CHAPTER FIVE

I'm certainly not the first person to use creativity to save my sanity. Or to use my Depression to fuel my creativity. Before we move on to the juicy details of how to turn the Depression Demon into a CFB, here's a few people to check out if you need more inspiration.

Carrie Fisher

I was never a fan of Star Wars, but I absolutely adore Carrie Fisher. This woman handled her own mental illness with class, grit and determination and she didn't give a fuck who didn't like her. Sure, watch her movies, but to get a true sense of the woman, check out her books

https://www.amazon.com/Carrie-Fisher/e/B000AP7SXW?ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_4&qid=1577063597&sr=8-4

Peter Steele

The lead vocalist and bass player of Type O Negative is one of those polarizing figures that you either love or hate. You can probably guess which side of the fence I'm on and I swear it has nothing to do with deep voice or luxurious black hair. Honest. What I love about Peter Steele is his wicked sense of humor and the fact that he blatantly used Depression to create some of the most brilliant songs I've ever heard. If you're easily offended, you're probably best not go anywhere near his work but if you love dark humor and attitude, you can thank me later.

https://www.amazon.com/Type-O-Negative/e/B000AQ0CIY/digital/ref=ntt_mp3_rdr?encoding=UTF8&sn=d

Jim Carrey

I can't stand Jim Carrey's humor, I really can't. I've never enjoyed slapstick and movies like *Dumb and Dumber* make me want to hide under the couch. Ick. Having said that, I love the way he talks about his Depression. He's very wise when it comes to managing the demon even though he doesn't always

make the wisest decisions. And he wrote a kid's book!

https://www.amazon.com/Jim-Carrey/e/B00ENFKZQC?ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_2&qid=1577064973&sr=1-2

Angelina Jolie

Love her or hate her, Ms Jolie has never been backward about coming forward. She often talks freely about her Depression (and other issues) and I love the fact that she's her own woman. She does a lot for charity, a lot for her kids and a lot to raise awareness about many issues.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelina_Jolie

Lady Gaga

I'm so not a fan of her music but I couldn't leave her off the list. I know how inspirational she is for other people and not just because of her Depression: she has some physical stuff going on as well.

https://www.amazon.com/Lady-Gaga/e/B001LH2W8E?ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1&qid=1577065570&sr=1-1

Demi Lovato

If Depression's not enough demon for you, throw in some addiction to the mix. This woman has it both and very publicly owns up to her relapses with addiction and her other demons. A wise woman.

<http://www.demilovato.com/>

Emma Thompson

This woman is all class and she's not afraid to call you out if she thinks you're being a dick. A quick search on youtube will show you many times when she politely tells reporters off for asking dumb questions. She's big on self-care as a way to manage her Depression and often takes time off work just to heal. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Emma-Thompson>

Mike King

If you don't live in New Zealand, you might have to google this guy but trust me, he's a very interesting character. If you're unaware, NZ is a real blokey country, our men don't talk about feelings, or even admit to having any. Mike King was a well-known comedian who had a regular spot on a popular quiz show about rugby. (Yes, we have those). All of a sudden (well, it seemed that way to many of his fans) he did a switch and started talking about mental health and his own experience with Depression. He now runs a national charity that raises funds and awareness to help youth with mental illness. <https://www.iamhope.org.nz/OurPeople/Mike-King>

There are many more people I could add to this list, I've stuck with actresses and singers mainly because they're the easiest to find information about. I could just as easily have made this list about painters, writers, and sculptors. And that's just the famous people. I could have added a list of the people I've worked with over the years who aren't famous but are true heroes to me. Every single person that battles their own brain every day because of the demon Depression deserves to be on a list of inspirational people who manage their illness.

CHAPTER SIX

Depression fucking sucks. We've already established that. I don't have the time or the energy to list the many reasons *why* Depression fucking sucks but I'm sure you can come up with a few yourself. But one of the main reasons the demon fucking sucks is because it robs you of so much. Your future, your dreams, your excitement about what comes next. It robs you of your ability to feel passionate about something. Anything!

We're going to take that passion back now.

What? You don't think you can feel that passion again? I assure you, you can. But you don't have to believe me yet. What I'd like you to do, is fill out the following worksheets. Take your time. Give your answers as much thought as they need.

A word of warning: this process could be exhausting so make sure you've got your self-care plan organized before you start. I've also supplied you with a worksheet to manage that on the next page.

My Self-Care Plan for When Things Really Fucking Suck

<u>Things I could do.</u>	<u>Things I'm going to do.</u>
<div>Read</div> <div>Scream</div> <div>Listen to Music</div> <div>Workout</div> <div>Dance</div> <div>Punch a cushion</div> <div>Talk to a friend</div> <div>Cuddle a pet</div> <div>Sleep</div> <div>Cuddle a human</div> <div>Sing</div> <div>Watch a movie</div> <div>Have a bath</div> <div>Take a walk</div> <div>Write my feelings out</div> <div>Vent to a FB</div> <div>Arts and Crafts group</div> <div>Go for a drive</div> <div>Hide</div>	<div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div>
<u>Things I really shouldn't do</u>	<u>Things I'm absolutely not going to do</u>
<div>Drink alcohol</div> <div>Eat Rubbish</div> <div>Yell at the people I love</div> <div>Scream at pets</div> <div>Drive like a madwoman</div> <div>Take drugs</div>	<div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div>

<p>Take my frustrations out on random strangers</p> <p>Go Shopping</p> <p>Make any major decisions</p> <p>End any relationships</p>	
<p><u>Things I really need to avoid when things are tough</u></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p><u>People I really need to avoid when things are tough</u></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<p><u>Things I can do daily to help me cope</u></p> <p>Meditation</p> <p>Journaling</p> <p>Affirmations</p> <p>Visualizations</p> <p>1 hour of me time – dance</p> <p>Coloring</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>Playing with the pets</p> <p>1-hour pampering time – try new makeup</p>	<p><u>Things I'm going to do daily to help me cope</u></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>

outfits	Try new	
tub	Soak in the	
Ensure you have at least one good belly laugh each day.		
Pay someone else a compliment		
<u>My most favorite thing to do ever!</u>		<u>My most favorite person to be with ever!</u>

Once you've got your self-care organized, and ONLY after you've got your self-care organized, move onto this next worksheet. Now, some of these questions may sound completely daft but there's a reason for each and every one of them. We're trying to get you to remember things that mattered to you before the Depression kicked in. So, even if you think the question's completely pointless, answer it anyway.

Shit That used to Matter and can Matter Again

	My Childhood/Teenage Years
What was my favorite thing about growing up where I did?	
What was my favorite thing to do when I was a child? Teenager?	
Who were my friends when I was a child? Teenager?	
What did I want to be as an adult when I was a child? Teenager?	
What were my favorite tv programs as a child?	

Teenager?	
What were my favorite books as a child? Teenager?	
What were my favorite sports/games/music when I was a child? Teenager?	
	My Adulthood
Which people, friends, and family from my childhood, are still in my life now?	
What do I believe in? What's important to me?	
What's my favorite tv program now?	
What are my favorite books now?	

What are my favorite sports/games now	
What is my favorite thing to do when I want to relax?	
How do I look after myself every day?	
What makes me laugh now?	
Who are the main supports in my life?	
What's my most favorite thing that I own?	
What do I spend my money on, apart from bills?	
Who do I admire	

now? Why?	
What am I good at?	
What would I like to be better at?	
What's my fashion style?	
What culture do I identify with the most? Why?	
What really makes my blood boil?	
What would I like to ask my favorite celebrity? Fictional character? Person currently in the news?	
What makes me	

feel like a kid again?	
How do I express love?	
Do I believe I have a purpose in life? If yes, what is it?	
What do I think is wrong with the world right now?	
What's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me?	

	My Career
What is my favorite thing about what I do during a normal day?	
What is my idea of a successful life?	
What is the thing that really sucks about my life?	
What is my most unrealistic, fantastical work-related goal?	
What is holding me back from pursuing my huge goal?	

	Randomness
What does spirituality mean for me?	
If I could travel anywhere in the Universe where would I go?	
What do I wish other people knew about me?	
What is the thing I'm most frightened of?	
What have been the major events in my life?	
When was I at my happiest throughout my life?	
What, or who,	

<p>makes me laugh?</p>	
<p>What's my favorite memory? Why?</p>	
<p>What's the best gift I've ever given someone? Why?</p>	
<p>What's the best gift I've ever received? Why?</p>	

Once you've completed this worksheet, put your pen down, step away from the paper, and forget about it for a few days. You want to be able to come back to it with fresh eyes so that you can easily recognize any patterns or themes that are showing up for you. Don't worry about trying to interpret it yet, I'll walk you through it soon.

Once you've had some time away come back and complete this worksheet:

My Depression Demon Slaying Plan of Attack

Things I love.	1. 2. 3.
Things I don't love.	1. 2. 3.
Things that scare me.	1. 2. 3.
Things I'm good at.	1. 2. 3.

Things I want to learn	1. 2. 3.
Words that describe me.	1. 3. 5. 2. 4. 6.
Possible Careers	1. 2. 3.
Possible Hobbies/Interests	1. 2. 3.
People that can help.	1. 2. 3.

My new-found purpose in life!	
My new unrealistic, fantastical, crazy goal!	

By now, you should be starting to develop some ideas about what you want to do next. To help, here’s the final worksheet:

How I’m going to Turn the Depression Demon into a Creature of Fucking Beauty

How I’m going to share my wisdom and truth with the world:	
How I’m going to make this happen:	<div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div>

What I already know:	<div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div>
What I need to learn and how I'm going to learn it:	<div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div>
Who I'm going to ask for help:	<div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div>
What I'm going to do when it gets hard:	<div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div>

My first milestone will be:	
How I'm going to celebrate reaching my first milestone:	1. 2. 3.

Still with me? Good. I know how hard filling in these sheets can be particularly if the demons on your back. But hopefully, you've found a wee spark of interest in there somewhere. It doesn't have to be a fiery passion for now, or even a flame, it just has to be a wee spark.

CHAPTER SEVEN

You can expect this to be a relatively small chapter. Here's how to get started with turning the demon Depression into a CFB.

Start.

Yeah, okay, I was being a bit of a smartass, but seriously, once you've decided what you're going to do, you need to make a start. The thing to remember is that it doesn't have to be a *good* start. In fact, it probably shouldn't be. Despite what all the textbooks tell you, the most beautiful pieces of art are the ones that break all the rules.

And don't forget, you don't ever have to show anyone else what you've created. Personally, I hope you do because I'd love to see them, and I know that plenty of other people would to. In my opinion, one of the responsibilities that comes with having a mental illness like Depression, is that we have a duty to show the rest of the world what it looks like. After saying that, if you are going to show your beautiful creation to the world, you need to be in a good space. You will face critics; you will face haters. My attitude is "who gives a shit what they think?" But it's taken me a long time to get to that point, if you're not there yet, you'll get there.

Creatures of Fucking Beauty

Let's take a look at some of the beautiful things that can be created by using the demon Depression. There's the traditional type stuff:

- Paintings, sculpture, sketching
- Songs, poems, essays, novels
- Films, photographic art, graphic art

Then there's the crafty type stuff:

- Knitting, crochet, embroidery
- Gardening, flower arranging, dried flower art
- Card making, scrapbooking, jewelry making

How about some outside of the box beauty?

- Dressmaking
- Create a course
- Sell second-hand clothing or art online
- Interpretive dance
- Synchronized swimming routine

The point I'm trying to make is that there are many different types of beauty. Take crochet for example. When most people think of crochet, they think of doilies, granny squares, ugly hats with pom-poms on the top. But with a bit of imagination, you can create anything you like from basic crochet stitches. Let's walk through the process.

You're feeling like shit. The demon Depression has you firmly around the neck and you're suffocating under your own emotions. Your head is running over the same old nasty scripts again and again. You feel worthless, lost, alone, and hopeless.

Now. Grab a pen and paper and write down every word you can, about how you're feeling right now. Here's an example of what a list might look like.

Lost

Despairing

Hopeless

Scattered

Sad

Angry

Lonely

Misunderstood

Worthless

Not hungry

Hungry

Tired

Restless

Suicidal

Anxious

Desperate for a drink/drug/ whatever your addiction is

Fat

Skinny

Old

Dangerous

Unsafe – only add words like these to your list if they're words you actually use. Don't add words that your therapist, Doctor, or any other support staff use unless they really mean something to you.

Word Association Solitaire

Did you ever play that game called Word Association? That's what you're going to do now. Take the first word on your list and write it down in the middle of a blank piece of paper. In our example, the word is: "lost." Now, let's do some brainstorming. Write down every word that comes to mind when you think of "lost." Don't try to examine it, or analyze it, just get the words down on paper. Do this for at least 10 minutes, more if your ideas are still flowing. Every time you feel like you've wandered too far away from your original word, just come back to it. Now do this for every word on your list.

Finished your list? Great. Now go have a cuppa, that was hard work and you've earned a break. Once you've taken some time to recharge your batteries, go back to that first piece of paper you wrote on and spend some time reviewing what you wrote. For our "lost" list, we came up with:

Cold, frightened, tv, unhappy, childlike, foreign, forest, Hansel and Gretel, blue, yellow, admire, fancy, woodsman, snow white, birds, scattered, mindless, in my head, trees, leaves, kiwis, crying, tears, on purpose, faking my own death, suicide, music in the distance, speed, horse riding, stars, night, planets, space, space travel, aliens, nerds, the big bang theory, star trek, star wars, Moeraki boulders, animals, spirit guides, forgotten, small,

wishing for home, ET, moon, moonlight, eclipse, alone, lonely, Roy Orbison, Elvis, witch, warlock, Merlin, standing stones, Arthur, Lady Morgana, pain, heart pain, physical pain, heartache, blood, stabbing, unsettled, unreliable, unsure, confused, complicated.

My Confession

I only did this for five minutes, but that's enough to give you the idea of what I'm suggesting. Now you've got some ideas to work with. What jumps out at you? How about some Star Trek fan fiction? A painting of Hansel and Gretel in the forest? A short film about a woodsman? A sculpture of aliens or your perception of spirit guides? A short story about a stabbing. A craft work about Arthur and Camelot? Your options are endless, and you are only limited by your imagination.

So...start. Don't let doubt or fear get in the way, and don't tell me that you don't have a creative bone in your body. Are you a good cook? Could you create a meal or recipe based on your favorite song? There are no rules to follow here, just let yourself be inspired and you might be very surprised at what comes next for you.

CHAPTER EIGHT

By now, you've hopefully started, if not finished, your first CFB, whatever that might be. If you still don't have any idea of what you could do, go through the exercises again. I promise you; this will work for you. You are not different, your depression is not different (although it is individual), this *will* work. But you might need to do the exercises twice or even more times before it kicks in. If you're really struggling, ask someone you trust to work through them with you, that might help spark an interest.

And don't get hung up on the word's *creativity* or *beauty*. Creativity can be something as simple or as mundane as making yourself a sandwich. And beauty? Beauty truly is found in everything; it all depends on what you're into. For example, as a vampire-loving goth witch, I love dead things whereas other people think I'm mad and only find beauty in the light. It's all relative.

Many a business has started with one product, one idea, or even one mission. In my case, writing a novel, led to me writing a blog, which led to me eventually creating a business as a freelance writer. Nowadays, I'm a writer, tarot card reader, wellness advocate for doTERRA oils and a Mentor and Guide for women who are childless by circumstance and not by choice. I've created a course for Valties (valued, Valkyrie, Aunties) to find another passion in their lives, and I create mental health essential oil blends and lava bracelets that I sell online and from the front room of my home.

Yes, all the above came from my decision to slay the demon Depression by writing a Vampire novel. You don't have to take it that far, but there may come a time when you want to. Or, if you decide that you'd like to start a blog, you can monetize that from the start although it will take some time for you to build up an audience and begin to earn a livable income from it.

Turning your Creature of Fucking Beauty into a Business!

If you do decide to start a business, there's a lot to consider. Can you run the business from home, or will you need premises? Can you work part-

time, or will it need to be full-time? Do you want to sell products online, at craft markets, in shops? What will you do if you're flooded with orders? Do you have any start-up money? Do you need a license, or training?

I strongly suggest you find yourself a good business mentor (message me if you need help and I can give you some recommendations) who can guide you with this process, because believe me, a whole bunch of stuff will crop up that you haven't considered before. That's just the way it goes.

Fortunately, there's plenty of information on the internet that will help and a lot of it is free. Just be selective about who you trust and who you don't.

If you do take the business route, you're going to have to step up the self-care. Running a business, even a business you love with all your heart and soul, is stressful so make sure you do something, every day, that looks after you. Meditate, exercise, ring a friend, read a book, anything that takes you away from yourself or your business for a few moments is helpful.

A word of warning

A word of warning about running an online business: people will say things to you in the comments section of a post that they would never, ever, say to your face. So, keep that in mind. If facebook is a trigger for you, stay away from it. If you don't think you'll be able to cope with the inevitable criticism that comes with an online business, either don't do it, or hire someone else to manage that side of things for you. Whatever you do, stay safe.

Of course, you don't have to do anything with your CFB, unless you really want to. You can simply sit back, admire it, and tell yourself what a good job you've done on it. However, it's a pretty good bet that once you start this process, you'll want to continue it. But, at your own pace, while looking after your own symptoms, and honoring your own demons.

CHAPTER NINE

Other people fucking suck. Well okay, not always, and maybe not all of them, but a good number of people really fucking suck. And as soon as you start turning your Depression demons into CFB's those sucky people are all going to come out of the woodwork. They'll tell you that you're not well enough to start a new project, your medication dulls your creativity, you'll never be as good as (fill in the blank), are you sure your therapist's okay with this? And on and on and on it will go.

Fuck them. Don't listen to them. They know nothing.

Depression robs you of so many things

Don't let someone else rob you as well. There is no reason at all why you can't start your CFB when you're unwell. If your medication dulls your creativity, it's a side effect of the medication. What do we do with side effects? We either work through them or try another medication. You're not trying to be as good as (fill in the blank) and if you are, you're missing the point. Creativity is about individuality, not following the rest of the sheep. And as for your therapist, I absolutely guarantee that you will never find a therapist who will tell you not to use your creativity! They may object to the form that creativity takes but if you're not harming anyone or anything else? Fuck them.

In actual fact, you'll probably find that your biggest critic will be yourself but there's a way around that as well. Have you ever watched the tv show "Shameless?" I recently discovered it and have been addicted ever since but one scene stands out for me, I thought it was a brilliant solution to a very familiar problem for people who suffer from mental illness.

If you don't know the show, one of the main character's, Ian, has Bipolar Disorder. It's managed well with medication but as we all know, sometimes things go a bit haywire. In this story arc, Ian becomes slightly manic and starts making dangerous decisions at work. He's unable to recognize that he might be ill until his boss makes him look at a video on her phone. The

video was made by Ian when he was 100% well and is him telling himself that he needs to pay attention to the other people who are telling him he's not well and he should go home and rest. I thought it was a brilliant way to manage this.

If you're at all susceptible to harsh self-criticism, and I defy you to find anyone with Depression who isn't, make yourself a video and give it to someone you trust to show you when you're beating yourself up. Or maybe even look at it every day as a pre-emptive strike against beating yourself up. Tell yourself that your CFB doesn't have to be perfect to be beautiful, that you are creative in your own unique way, and that you can slay the demon Depression by turning it into something beautiful.

CHAPTER TEN

I know it's hard. Living with the demon that is Depression is like living in the middle of a battlefield where it's dark and you know you should fight but you can't see through the darkness to be able to charge at the enemy. It's not fair. It's not right and it's not fair and I can't tell you why this happened to you and not the asshole down the street. Who knows? Maybe the asshole is Depressed and that's why he's an asshole.

I wouldn't wish Depression on my worst enemy but I'm also grateful that I've spent most of my life with the demon. I truly am. Not in a vaguely spiritual way but in the way that I'm grateful for the experiences that have made me stronger. If I hadn't coped with Depression all my life, I don't think I would have been able to live through the earthquake in 2011. And I'm 99% sure I would have made a different decision when I faced my childlessness if I hadn't survived a lifetime of despair that only Depression can give you.

I don't believe I would have been as empathetic as I am, and I very much doubt I would have taken a job in mental health if I hadn't had Depression. And then I wouldn't have had the chance to work with the inspiring, fascinating, and genuine clients that I have over the years. My Goddess, they taught me so much.

I don't think I would have developed my spirituality as much as I have, or my interest in natural therapies. And I'm pretty damn sure that if I hadn't ended up with Depression, I would have ended up with an addiction of some sort. One that might very well have killed me.

I'm not going to tell you that Depression is a gift and that you should appreciate what it gives you, I have no intention of being that patronizing and I can't begin to know what your Depression feels like to you. I can only talk of my own Depression. And yes, I'm writing this book from the perspective of a good place, where my medication and mood is relatively stable. But make no mistake, I'm stable because I work every single fucking day to make sure that I stay stable. It's why there are some people I no longer allow into my life, why some foods, drinks, and even music is no longer a part of my life. It's why I'm always aware of how much sleep I'm

getting, how many nightmares I'm having during that sleep, and what my rampaging menopausal hormones are doing at any given moment.

I don't always get it right, but I always try. And on the days where I just can't find the energy to try, I go to bed and wait for it to pass. I remember a so-called friend once telling me that she no longer came to visit me because "she never knew what mood I was going to be in." Now, this conversation happened around 30 years ago but I still remember it well and I remember how it felt. And as much as it hurt, she was right. What she didn't realize at the time was, *I never knew* what mood I was going to be in. From one minute to the next.

The nature of the beast

Depression is unpredictable, can hit you instantly and hard, but it's also subtle at times and creeps up on you when you least expect it. As we know, some people have one major incident of Depression during their lifetime and never experience it again. But some of us, live with it, day in and day out.

Those of us that live with it on a daily basis know that some days are better than others. But ultimately, we have control over how we manage something as personal as our own Depression. The best thing we can do for ourselves is decide *how* we're going to live. But we need to make that decision when we're well. And I hate to sound like a medical professional, but we do need to make a plan, when we're well, for the times when we're not so well. What the medical profession doesn't seem to understand is that our plan for wellness, doesn't have to look anything like the plan they make for us. It's our Depression and therefore our choice how we manage the demon. We do have the power.

Okay. I'll get off my soapbox now. I hope you've found this book enjoyable. More importantly, I hope you found it helpful. Using Depression to create something fucking beautiful is a way of life for me. My Depression and my desire to help others cope with their Depression fuels everything I do and has helped me to create a life that's not perfect, but one that I'm pretty damned happy with. I hope you can make that happen for you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fiona Tate, also known as Countess Drusilla Steele, is a Lilithian Witch, Depression Muse and dark wellness advocate. She lives in a small seaside village in New Zealand with the Count, her furbabies, and various ghosts. You can usually find her deep within her crypt, tapping away on her laptop and making Creatures of Fucking Beauty.

<https://countessdrusillasteele.com>

