



# The Truth About Depression: Choices for Healing

By Charles L. Whitfield

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New breakthroughs made by health professionals dislodge this theory, and show that frequently previous traumas are what lead to mental illness.

In this bold new book, renowned physician and psychotherapist Charles Whitfield takes a new look at the common problems of depression, anxiety, addictions, eating disorders, schizophrenia and other mental illness. *The Truth About Depression* shows the strong and at times causal relationship between childhood trauma and future depression and other mental illness; he explores the risks, side-effects and high cost of treating these disorders with anti-depressant drugs, and; provides an alternative treatment and recovery program for people with depression and a history of childhood trauma.

Dr. Whitfield's book offers hope and help for those who have been held hostage by depression, and provides clinicians with new solutions and alternatives to high-risk medications.

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### **Editorial Review**

From the Inside Flap

"A bold and unfettered view of depression today. Whitfield's clear observations and courageous approach make an exciting read. A must for understanding depression in our current clinical, cultural and political climate."

—J. Douglas Bremner, M.D., associate professor of psychiatry, Emory University School of Medicine author, *Does Stress Damage the Brain?*

"It gives me great pleasure to endorse Charles Whitfield's important and useful book, *The Truth About Depression: Choices for Healing*. Among his many important insights, Dr. Whitfield makes the important connection between childhood trauma and depression. Written for both a lay and clinical professional audience, this book will be of great value to readers because it clearly lays out the parameters of the various types of depression—as well as its treatment. It also documents the relationship between child abuse of all kinds and the later possibility of lifetime depression and other serious psychological illness. Although psychology and psychiatry have been addressing the reality of trauma in childhood as a major cause of mental illness, before Whitfield's book this strong evidence was spread throughout the clinical and scientific literature. It has not been condensed in one volume until now. *The Truth About Depression* is an essential, clearly written explanation of one of the most common illnesses that strikes humankind."

—Paul Jay Fink, M.D., past president, American Psychiatric Association professor of psychiatry, Temple University School of Medicine

"Important and useful. From his extensive experience with adult survivors of childhood trauma, Charles Whitfield, M.D., challenges conventional views about the cause and treatment of depression. Clear and well-documented, this book shows us that depression is usually best understood not as a mental illness, but rather as a normal response to abnormal life experiences (traumas), most of which go unrecognized because of their concealment by shame, social nicety and taboo. Integrating current developments in neurobiology, Dr. Whitfield helps us appreciate the important distinction between experiential cause and neurochemical mechanism in depression. Physicians, other clinicians, patients and families will find this a helpful book about the cause and treatment of depression. Highly recommended."

—Vincent J. Felitti, M.D., California Institutes of Preventive Medicine

About the Author

Charles L. Whitfield, M.D., is a physician and psychotherapist in private practice in Atlanta. He is a nationally known speaker and is the author of *Memory and Abuse*, *Boundaries and Relationships*, the best-selling *Healing the Child Within* and *A Gift to Myself*.

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### **Introduction**

Throughout history we have looked for the cause of depression and other mental illness, and we still don't know it. The two major theories have long been and remain: nature (genes, biology) versus nurture (environment, family).

Our mistake has been to focus on only one or the other. In fact, based on our current knowledge, it appears

that both nature and nurture are active factors in most people with mental disorders. These afflictions include:

- Depression and suicidality
- Anxiety disorders
- Alcohol and other drug problems
- Personality disorders
- Attention deficit disorder (ADD) and violence
- Eating disorders
- Schizophrenia
- Dissociative disorders

In 1999 I began writing notes for my own use that summarized what I understood about depression and other so-called mental disorders based on what I had observed in my private practice and what I was reading in the clinical scientific literature. After I wrote half of it as these "notes to myself," I realized that this information was too important not to share it. Sixteen years ago I wrote *Healing the Child Within* in a similar vein. I wrote it as educational material for my private patients, and not for public distribution. Eventually it was published by Health Communications and has sold about 1.5 million copies. Its usefulness was spread mostly by word of mouth from readers.

Since then the principles I described there have not changed. They are still valid. But the literature to back it up has expanded to such an extent that I believe that it is now worth sharing with you. Its main problem is that this valuable and validating literature is scattered over numerous journals and books, many of them unknown to most people, published both in this country and around the world—mostly over the last twenty years.

In this book I take a new look at the common problem of depression. In the second and companion volume, *The Truth About Mental Illness*, I take a similar fresh look at other common mental illness. While many helping professionals and consumers have made the connection between childhood and later trauma and the onset of mental disorders, many have not. Some may be partially aware but don't know how strong the trauma-mental disorder link is. This book will:

1. Show the strong and perhaps even causal relationship between trauma and depression;
2. Show the risks, side effects, marginal efficacy, and high cost of antidepressant and other drugs commonly used today;
3. Provide an alternative treatment and recovery program for people who have depression and a history of childhood and other traumas.

Mental illness is common. It may affect up to 40 percent of the United States population during their lifetime. Since about 1960 psychiatry has gradually been building a biological base for the mental illness that it treats. While some have criticized it, its evolving American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) has helped clarify a number of ways that psychiatrists and other clinicians have come to view some of the more painful aspects of the human condition. During this time, countless articles and books were published to support their growing idea that most mental illness is due to a genetically transmitted brain problem. With the help of the drug industry, this theory spread throughout medicine and the helping professions, and eventually into the public belief system.

In 1974, the United States Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which supported the child abuse prevention and treatment movement. Although there had been sporadic papers and reports

describing the effects of childhood trauma since 1896 (e.g., written by Freud, Janet, Brauer, Ferenzci and Horney), clinical and basic researchers began to report their findings on these effects, especially from the mid-1980s.

It may be timely now to promote the role of the helping professions in the treatment of traumatized children and adults, as well as the personal power of trauma survivors to help themselves heal. This is because the documented evidence in the clinical scientific literature has increased since 1980 to show a strong link between trauma and depression and other mental disorders. In this book and the next, I describe this evidence for each of the most common illnesses. The most studied and commonly reported disorder linked with a history of childhood trauma is depression, which I cover in this book. I also present principles of trauma, its effects, and its treatment and recovery. In the second volume I then review the next most reported and trauma-linked disorders. These are: addictions, including alcohol and other drug problems, eating disorders, nicotine dependence, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, personality disorders, psychosis, behavior problems and violence. These two volumes will interact and support one another periodically in their text.

The data found in the nearly 300 scientific reports that I summarize and cite raises potentially important questions and concerns for all child, adolescent and adult victims of trauma and the clinicians who assist them. How can we improve our awareness of and our approach to people who have experienced childhood and later trauma? Given this new knowledge, how can mental health services best be improved? And how can survivors of trauma recognize its effects on themselves and then find effective recovery aids, including knowledgeable and experienced health professionals? While assistance from clinicians may provide an important way for trauma survivors to help identify the causal factors for their pain and help them discover how best to handle it, it is ultimately up to affected individuals to become aware of the link between their pain and numbness and their past trauma.

In my research over the years I am sure that I have missed some important articles, chapters and books that support the numerous findings that I cite here in this book. I hope that the authors of studies I may have missed will tell me of their work so that I can add it to this already massive collection of important but overlooked data proving my observations.

I also ask that the reader bear with me when the reading may be dry. By translating this wealth of otherwise dense and complex information into a more reader friendly and useful format, this may be the first time that anyone has gathered and explained the truth about depression and other mental illness and our choices to heal from them.

We can step out of the box of our conservative and sometimes limited beliefs about the nature and cause of mental illness. I ask the reader to consider opening your mind to the possibility that trauma from childhood could be contributing to or even causing some mental illness. And perhaps with this new information you will understand an important alternative to healing it. Armed with this understanding, people with depression and other so-called mental illnesses can now consider more possibilities and choices as they heal. At the same time, some of their family may now be able to support these alternative forms of healing. This book offers state-of-the-art information that I hope will allow affected people and their families, their clinicians and other important people in their lives, to expand their understanding of the mystery of depression and other mental illness.

Charles L. Whitfield, M.D.

Atlanta, Georgia

January 2003

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## **Users Review**

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#### **Marvin Gamez:**

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or maybe read a book entitled *The Truth About Depression: Choices for Healing*? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can smarter than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have other opinion?

#### **Tiffany Hernandez:**

Now a day people who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources in it can be true or not demand people to be aware of each facts they get. How people have to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Reading through a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information particularly this *The Truth About Depression: Choices for Healing* book because this book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the information in this book hundred per cent guarantees there is no doubt in it you may already know.

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#### **Curtis Swasey:**

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reading especially. It is to be very first opinion for you to like to wide open a book and go through it. Beside that the book *The Truth About Depression: Choices for Healing* can to be your friend when you're experience alone and confuse using what must you're doing of their time.

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