

When You Need Medication

There are some things in this life that are undeniable. A few are “God is good,” “Healing is right” and “Living with depression is hard.” When I was served this “confusion cocktail,” I felt alone, ashamed, unusable and out of place. Though living with depression can be difficult, I have recently made a discovery that depression may be a diagnosis, but it doesn’t have to be a verdict on my life.

This journey of discovery started in 2000, a year of several transitions for our little family. We found out that our little boy was going to become a big brother, and we moved, not once, but twice. Up until our second move, the year’s transitions were all positive. However, near the end of July, I found out that our new little miracle had passed away. I could immediately feel the sorrow and grief start crashing over me in waves.

One thing that helped me through this ordeal was having closure. I was able to hold our little girl, Julia. I saw her perfect little fingers and toes. We had a small service for her at a nearby cemetery. For the most part, I was able to step back into my roles as wife, mother and ministry teacher again.

However, when a second miscarriage happened the following February with no warning and no closure, I felt stuck in a very dark place. I could not shake the grief this time, and it felt like it carved itself into my soul. The grief, sorrow and sadness became a part of me and would not let go.

Years later, I visited my physician and came out with a diagnosis of clinical depression and a prescription for low-dose antidepressants. I lost my battle with depression, but I realized that I could be a better mother and wife by treating it rather than not treating it.

When a fresh move of the Holy Spirit came through our church, my hope for healing was stirred. I went down for prayer, knowing that I could be healed. When I felt like God had lifted that unwelcomed guest of depression, I discussed it with my physician. She advised me on how to discontinue the medication, and I followed her instructions. I felt free and walked in freedom for a few months, until out of the blue, the heaviness came down upon me like a wet blanket. I felt worse than before, and soon I revisited my physician; I have been on the same low-dose medication ever since.

Living with depression, treated or not, is hard. With it come a myriad of accusations from the enemy, and many cannot be denied. But there are also words from those around you who may or may not understand depression that can cut you to the core. They are the kind of words that challenge your faith and steadfastness.

One time when I was in a large group setting, the speaker compared women who took antidepressants to crack addicts. Another time in a one-on-one confrontation, I was told I did not have any faith to be healed of depression. In both instances, I wanted to disappear. My heart, my soul, my psyche had been violated in such a way that I wanted to run. Those events almost took me completely out of my race.

However, with all that turmoil and anger and hurt that stirred within me, I made a conscious decision to not blame God or turn away from Jesus or the church. Was it hard to go to church? Yes! But my spirit-man longed to be in the presence of God, though sometimes it was uncomfortable. The only place I had experienced His presence was at church, and I wasn't about to give that up.

I struggled through my anger, and I had to choose to exchange it for something else before it turned into bitterness. I had to choose to forgive those who had said those hurtful words. I had to choose to extend to them respect and love. I had to

choose to take control of my feelings and not let the depression overrule my better judgment.

I can't let depression be an excuse for my behavior or attitudes. I can't let it lead my life. I choose to take control of it and live my life for Jesus. So, I take antidepressants, but I am a more stable, productive and focused person because of it. Though I am reminded every day that I lost my battle with depression, I remember that I have chosen to remain in the war, in the good fight, in the race. Even when it is hard, I choose Jesus and trust in His promises. He is all I need.

Lisa Renfrow *lives in Missouri with her husband, Scott, and their three sons. She serves at her church in children's ministry and is currently working on a young adult novel. Her book Big Bible Lessons for Little Children has been sold internationally and is available through .*