My Daughter, Her Suicide, and God: A Memoir of Hope
By Marjorie Antus
Reviewed by: Lisa Schenke, Author of Without Tim: A Son’s Fall to Suicide, A Mother’s Rise from Grief

My Daughter, Her Suicide, and God: A Memoir of Hope details Marjorie Antus’ struggles with understanding and accepting her daughter’s suicide. Although Marjorie’s teenage daughter, Mary, had suffered from depression, the family was completely shocked when Mary took her own life in September of 1995. A very thorough suicide note only added to Marjorie’s anger and confusion.

As Marjorie attempted to reconcile Mary’s suicide with her belief in God, she remained fully committed to completing her master’s degree in theology and strengthening her community involvement as a member of a Roman Catholic religious order, the Discalced Carmelites. In addition to working on herself, Marjorie and her husband, John, were taking care of a younger daughter and an older son who was extremely fragile due to his own depression.

Walking through the pages of this book with Marjorie helped me understand not only Marjorie’s self-discoveries in her recovery, but helped strengthen mine. As a mom who lost a son to suicide, married with two other children, I often contemplated my own life as I slowly, deeply processed each chapter. While Marjorie and I are both Christian women who were raising children and living fulfilling lives, we have taken many different paths in our healing. Each story of a mom’s recovery, and, in turn, a family’s recovery, opens me up to new ideas and further reflection.

What struck me most were some of our common realizations, such as, “Grief resolution entails making a new place for the deceased person in your emotional life so that you can get on with your own life.” A few other conclusions drawn or referenced by Marjorie that resonated so strongly with me are, “You’re just not that powerful. Surrender everything to God, stop searching for answers, and find a way to live with the ambiguity”, “We advance by unknowing”, and “Mental illness took away her ability to reason; it dehumanized and broke her. She was innocent, and she suffered unspeakably.”

I close my review with what I found to be the most meaningful and empowering sentence from My Daughter, Her Suicide, and God: A Memoir of Hope: “There is still one more reason for telling this story about my daughter: it bears witness to her beautiful life and refuses to let suicide be its last word.”