Struck by Living: From Depression to Hope
By Julie K. Hersh, Brown Books Publishing Group, 2010
Reviewed by: Michele N. Carroll, Psy.D.

In Struck by Living: From Depression to Hope, Julie Hersh shares her personal struggle with depression and her subsequent journey to finding hope. Hersh’s adjustment to stay-at-home mother from being a highly regarded high-tech sales manager appears to have been one of the precipitants to her depression. Having lost her identity and role, things that were highly valued throughout her upbringing led to her journey from depression to hope. Hersh’s story demonstrates that depression can and does impact people of various social and economic backgrounds. Even when surroundings such as her’s seem “perfect” by society’s standards, depression can hit.

In a down-to-earth, easy reading style, the reader comes to know Hersh, her life, her brighter times, her sad times, and her struggle with life and living. Hersh writes in a comfortable style, so much so, that the reader easily feels connected to her. She could be your friend, neighbor, co-worker, or family member. Hersh is honest and courageous in her search for answers to, and about the treatment of, her depression.

While most people find pharmacological treatments to be effective, Hersh found that what treated her depression most remarkably was ECT. Her fears of ECT cultivated by media portrayals of it as barbaric treatment, her concerns with the stigma of mental illness and the possible effects of depression on her family, in addition to her struggles to accept treatment are written in a personal and raw manner. She brings the reader on her journey to find hope through her depression.

I recommend this book to survivors of suicide and family members struggling with their loved ones’ depression. Hersh provides a detailed and personal description of what depression is and how enduring struggles with suicidality can be. I also recommend this book to clinicians working in the field as it can build empathy and understanding for individuals who suffer from depression and suicidal thoughts/attempts. Researchers may be less interested in the book as it is a personal story, rather than research-oriented.

In conclusion, Hersh gives the reader the idea that depression is an illness that skews one’s perception of reality. Even for those who seem to “have it all,” depression can and does occur; even with protective factors [Hersh had a loving family, strong social support, and no noted co-occurring conditions], individuals may struggle with suicidality. The reader is left with the message that willingness to seek and accept treatment is the catalyst to help people move “from depression to hope.”