

PART ONE

Prologue

My wife keeps telling me to stop being so damned intellectual. I suppose that it's become a habit after years of therapy and mental nitpicking. I tend to analyse everything, trying to gain perspective on all sides, and when I write about it, I can sometimes become too serious and my language perhaps a little hard going. Up front I'd like to apologise if at any point in this book I have committed this crime and my wife has in fact missed it. Humour is one of the best therapies and my intention with the following is to inform, enlighten and to perhaps amuse you the reader, while you are discovering the realities of depression through the eyes of a sufferer.

Did you know that 'reality' is defined by academics, as what a particular percentage of the general public believes? It sounds bloody stupid doesn't it? But I suspect that 'reality' is far more than a word to be pigeonholed and far less of a mystery. The fact is that 'reality' I believe, is as individual to

each of us, as there are people wandering this earth. For me the concept of 'reality' has been bantered, dissected, muddled and determined so many times, that it has all but ceased to be within my own conscious mind. The way I see it, if my day to day existence coexists on some level with the thinking of others of my kind, then I feel that I share some level of 'normality', for want of a better word. Therefore connection with people must account for more than conforming to someone's idea of being and the whole argument of what is or isn't real, is rather pointless. Personally, I'd hate to be labelled 'normal', existing comfortably within someone else's idea of reality and expressed as a contributor to a large percentage of what everybody else thinks. I'd much prefer to be a singular entity, and however perverse and bizarre my behaviour, as long as I coexist with some level of success and I don't hurt anyone in the process, then I can be seen to embrace humanity in a positive way.

Introspection is a double-edged sword. In one sense it is a useful tool of understanding and growth, and in another a path to never-ending rabbit warrens. These unpredictable paths can lead to the deepest recesses of our complex subconscious minds, often unearthing realities about ourselves that we'd rather have remained hidden, let alone focussed upon and ultimately understood.

This rather painful process of self-examination I experienced through a life-long affliction called Dysthymia or Dysthymic Disorder- a long term, low-grade depression that

under undue stress can develop into debilitating clinical depression. I was born with it, given it via my father's DNA, and it wasn't until my life came into crisis that I realised what had so affected me. And now that this affliction has become full-blown as it were, I can now talk about, without breaking into a cold sweat, these rabbit warrens and where they have taken me, day in and day out.

Living with depression is not easy, but there seems to be so many sufferers in this day and age, we should be discussing it more freely and sharing this experience that has ultimately become 'the disease of the 21st century'. Knowledge is a powerful thing and a key to understanding, and let's face it, we need all the help we can get. The human condition has never been straightforward, in any sense.

This book is the mutterings of a man who proudly admits to not being normal nor adhering to the widely accepted view of reality, and whose intention with this book is simply to give solace to others of similar fate whom because of it, may feel isolated and alone. It is further hoped that this non-professional, layman's account of experience will impart some knowledge, but more importantly, give the reader a sense of hope and perhaps some basic tools with which to become the pilot on this unique journey.