

Inside Out

Recovery from Depression Using the Narrative Approach

By Damien Ridge (Review: Rebecca Atherton)

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £18.99

Cited as a guide for doctors, complementary therapists and mental health professionals, this evidence-based book lifts the lid on traditional methods and treatments for depression, illustrating how applying a narrative approach – that of respecting and engaging with patients' authentic stories – can be beneficial to recovery.

Throughout the book, individuals outline diverse life narratives and a number of similar threads emerge – primarily those of 'feeling different' and 'being an outsider'. Although depression is common within the community, affecting one sixth of the population, statistics reveal less than half of those experiencing difficulty turn to their GP for help. Presenting depression as a largely isolating interior condition, *Recovery from Depression* argues that a good relationship with a doctor can often be the vital ingredient to successful and lasting treatment.

Individuals interviewed for the book describe depression as "an onslaught of negative thoughts," "feelings of insurmountable isolation," "misery to the point of hellishness," and "anxiety to the point of terror". In shedding light on these experiences, Ridge puts a human face on the illness reminding us of the person behind it.

While recovery is complex, with no single treatment suiting every individual, it is repeatedly brought to our attention that it is a deeply personal journey, involving a "putting back together of the self," only this time, more authentically. Urging professionals to act as recovery allies to their patients – listening out for the things they do not say, helping them to select the narratives that most resonate with the way they are feeling, and suggesting and helping assemble a selection of helpful tools – widening the focus from simply prescribing anti-depressants, to considering and encompassing the many other options and resources available, *Recovery from Depression* shows how offering patients a choice and the feeling of an active role can initiate and encourage continued recovery.