

Fade Out Of Sadness

Nicole Soule

Copyright © 2017 by Nicole Soule

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Cover design by Patty Szczepanski

ISBN-10: 1977683223

ISBN-13: 978-1977683229

To those who know what the dark place feels like.

CONTENTS

	Prolouge	ii
One	Deep Breaths	1
Two	No Likes Today	Pg 8
Three	Sit Less. Move More	Pg 17
Four	Let It Go	Pg 25
Five	Yes to Solitude	Pg 32
Six	#Goals	Pg 40
Seven	100%	Pg 47
Eight	Magic & Power	Pg 55
	A Glass of Water	Pg 63
	Thank You	Pg 64
	About the Author	Pg 66

The goal of this book is not to tell you how to rise from sadness. Instead it should serve as an inspirational guide to allow you to heal and move forward. Understanding yourself ignites the power of healing. Just remember that you are not what you do, what you have, who you love or who loves you. There is something much deeper inside you, but only you can tap into that place.

A special thanks goes out to those who understood, helped and guided me through those years. You know who you are.

PROLOGUE

MY FIRST TIME

When I recognized my depression, I realized I stood locked in a glass, soundproof box. People saw my mouth open but just thought I was yawning when in fact screams rushed from my heart. My class assignments were a blur. I walked around campus like a ghost. I wanted to be invisible to my mentors, professors, sorority sisters, friends and campus organizations. I blew in the wind. But, they saw me as if I wore a scarlet letter on my chest and everyone assumed I wore it proudly. They saw my disinterest and lack of effort. They saw

my attitude shift, but, I didn't care. They had no understanding of the thoughts that ran through my head. At times I felt like I was falling while standing still, my mind suspended in space. I prayed I wouldn't land in hell, although I felt like hell was the only place I belonged. While everyone else smiled in the sun and planned their future lives, I spent my junior year of college hiding behind pain. Every time someone talked to me, it sounded like they were screaming—telling me to snap out of it and pay attention. To be more like them.

Hiding helped me avoid small talk and campus socializing. I took refuge in my room wrapped in a blanket watching movies. At every chance, I did just that, spending ten or twelve hours bingeing on movies. It turned into the ultimate escape. I knew I was free to let go of my pain during those hours as my eyes were glued to the television. Hope and strength glittered from the characters. They inspired me to push forward and reassured me that life looked brighter. But the inspiration faded as the credits appeared.

Unexpectedly, life came knocking on my door and I could no longer escape my pain. My grades were suffering, my bills were piling up and people were watching me suffer from a distance. Embarrassed about my grades and who I used to be just a few

months prior, I needed to actually do something to change. The universe whispered to me, “It’s time to get up and get out. Your moment of sadness is lingering too long and now the world needs you.”

Ashamed to share my feelings to friends and family, I researched ways to get me out of this slump. For the fear of being judged, I didn’t want to tell my closest allies how I felt. Depression in the black community was not a hot topic at this time and the thought of people thinking I was crazy, weak, soft, or insecure frightened me. In order to avoid any further suspicion, I simply called the campus-counseling center and set up an appointment. For the next two years, I visited the center every week, slowly clearing the smoke of my depression. At first I thought these sessions might be hard, but they were peaceful. They allowed me to let out my true feelings and make sense of them after hearing them aloud.

When venting to close friends, family and even our hairstylist, we are often subjected to judgment. Therapy is different. It is liberating. Sometimes I talked about my dreams for the future and left sad because my reality didn’t reflect what I wanted. Sometimes I left relieved and refreshed. There were good moments and bad moments. The winters were the worst. The Midwest gray skies and

freezing temperatures never made it easy to get up and get going. Even though the spring and summer months were better, loneliness still lingered. Lost with no destination, it took me a while to realize I had the power to fix my life.

The summer before my senior year brought peace and mental alignment. I took summer classes and held a part-time job near the university. I spent my days and nights alone, with the exception of a few friends dropping by to check on me or drag me out of my tiny apartment to have some fun. I cooked more and even changed my diet. I ate more fruits and vegetables and start drinking tea. I gained more confidence, slowly figuring out who I was meant to be. As I entered my senior year, I found peace in 18 credit hours and released my frustration preparing for a dance team audition.

Fast forward through that year, I went on to graduate, feeling a huge sense of relief but also a weight of fear and sadness. I felt bad for myself. College was the end of an era and I'd missed so much of it in the trance of depression. There were moments where my judgment was clouded with negative thoughts and pain, preventing me from being my true self. I also made decisions that taught me valuable lessons. If anyone tells you going to college is all about

classes and partying, I'm telling you it's not true. College is so much more than that. You lose yourself and you find yourself several times. At least I did.

Although I felt sad and weird at graduation, I felt as though I'd made it to the end. Now I could start over. I imagined a beautiful show of fireworks going off and my life leading me far into the sky of success. Well... there were no fireworks.... But, I found happiness in myself, landing a pretty cool job as a government staffer, traveling with my friends and moving out of my parents' home. I found happiness in the passionate young adult stuff, something I'd never experienced before.

A few years later, depression hit me again and I was back to square one. I had no idea how I was going to live the life I've always wanted to live. Hope was a thing of the past and I just knew the evilness of life now had the best of me. I couldn't cry because my tears were dried up. I was stagnate. It seemed as if nothing in my life was moving and I began to do the one thing I never wanted to do—seek external happiness. I wanted other people to make me happy. I wanted to find a job that made me happy. I wanted social media to make me happy. I wanted to move far away only because I thought

that would make me happy.

Defeat had pushed me to the ground and fear grasped my neck. While working part time at a boutique, I was afraid someone I knew would walk in the door and ask me how life was going. Unbeknownst to the world, I bounced around from different family member's homes, had barely any money and cried myself to sleep most nights. I often wanted to escape the room where I laid my head at night. I hated it. The fact that I was no longer living in my own home crushed my pride. Even when I didn't have much gas in my car I still needed to drive as far away from the reality as possible. I felt that no one wanted to be around me. I didn't even want to be around me. My family thought I had ruined my life. Some people even told me I was stupid and a disappointment. (Trust me, I was not a disappointment. Just lost.) So I drove past beautiful homes hoping I would gain a sense of motivation. But, it didn't work. At every second of my day, I felt like life was tossing me around like an unsecured passenger in the backseat of a police car.

After a year or so, my happiness high had returned for roughly six months then disappeared again. It was another draining cycle of depression. How could I be back at square one for the third time? Well, it's called recurrent depression. During an episode of

depression a connection forms between your negative thinking patterns and your mood. So every time you feel that mood, negative thoughts rise and you fall back into a spiral.

The realities of sadness and depression

Sadness is defined by a multitude of situations and feelings in our lives, triggered both internally and externally. Everyone experiences this normal emotional state at some point in life. But when we don't deal with our sadness, it fades into depression, an abnormal emotional state.

Depression often requires treatment, unlike sadness, which requires an emotional reaction. According to Irina Firstein, LCSW, the difference between sadness and depression is in the duration and intensity. As sadness fades and depression enters, emotions become uncontrollably dark.

Sadness typically lasts for a few days or a week, after which a person is able to continue living a normal life. It should not hinder you from living your life and should only serve as a minor fork in the road.

Depression, on the other hand, is a severe and prolonged state of mind and body in which normal sadness grows into a painful state of hopelessness, lack of motivation and fatigue.

How sadness can be invoked:

- ▶ Breakup
- ▶ Job loss or layoff
- ▶ Seasonal Sadness
- ▶ Death of a loved one (includes pets)
- ▶ Declining health
- ▶ Rejection

Depression symptoms:

- ▶ Extreme restlessness or anxiety
- ▶ Dramatic changes in your weight, appetite or appearance
- ▶ Constant fatigue
- ▶ Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- ▶ Loss of interest in common activities
- ▶ Inability to think clearly
- ▶ Sleeping Problems
- ▶ Thoughts of harm, death or suicide

If you find yourself lingering in sadness, pay attention. Try to understand your feelings and make sense of them. Actions are often controlled by an individual's emotional state. It is vital to all relationships to understand how and why such feelings occur. Depression can range from mild to extreme. You might start off resentful, irritable, or feeling like you need reassurance from someone else. But depression occurs when those feelings transform into not sleeping or sleeping too much, not eating or overeating, feeling like you've hit rock bottom, or worse—feeling like you'd be better off dead.

And here I am writing this book. Now, out of my third phase of depression, I realized that the fade simply happened because of my fight. Somehow I gathered myself and picked up my life and placed it on a higher shelf. I never gave up on my dreams, but most importantly, I never gave up on myself. Yes, I hated myself at times, but I never gave up. I knew that the only way to ever live a better life was for me to figure it out. There was no one to help me. Out of all the people I knew, no one could help rescue my soul. I didn't care how many times I ran into roadblocks or was knocked down. I was determined to see my vision of life be my reality.

It wasn't until I wrote this book that I realized the difference

between sadness and depression. I experienced times when I fell into the darkness without knowing how to escape. Like a dark and damp hole, this darkness became my home as I lived with depression for several years. I remember waking up, going through my daily routine, smiling at work, and telling people I was “doing great” in life. But on the inside I felt heavy. I was suffocating.

One of the most important stages in my process was speaking positive visions about myself. Beforehand, I looked at myself as a failure or worthless. My body would feel tired and restless. Once I started to think I was worthy, intelligent and had a right to live on this Earth, my body started to gain energy and motivation seeped through my veins.

The negative feelings of depression remain ready to be activated. It is up to us to learn how to control our emotions before we spiral out of control yet again. The phrase “we become what we think about” is true. If we think we are failures or unworthy, our actions begin to mirror our thoughts. If we think we are innovative and smart, our actions lead us to a life of happiness.

What I’ve learned from life thus far is that control is in my hands. Other people’s opinions of me do not shade my own personal

reflective value. People will love you and not like you. Whichever side of the line people are on is not your concern. You keep living and accepting all the beautiful things life has to offer you.

Let me warn you that this is not a how-to get over your situation or heal your pain book. Sadness will strike you unexpectedly in your lifetime. Depression can creep up on you and cling to you without you realizing. Let this book serve as a reminder that the sun will shine over you again even after the darkest moments. Throughout this book, I will give you personal accounts of how each recommendation changed my life and helped me fade out of sadness.

All you have to do is keep pushing forward. One day, out of the beautiful blue sky, rainy day or the darkest of night, you will realize that you've overcome and found true happiness again.

"I realized the world needed me. And the world needs you. Everyone has a place and you are entitled to your path. You bring something unique to this world and if you don't walk your path then it'll just be another dead end."

-Nicole Soule

DEEP BREATHS

While we all have different experiences, one thing we have in common is our breaths. We often take for granted our breaths, the natural exercise that keeps us alive. You never remember to breathe. It just happens. There is no one to help us breathe. No one to tell us when we can and cannot breathe. It is your human right to breathe. Have you ever thought about how important our breaths really are? Have you ever taken a moment to listen to yourself breathe? If you pay attention to your breaths or loved ones, you will find peace, stillness and focus. (I even find peace in my dog's breathing when she

is sleeping.)

It's more important to care about your breathing rather than discuss gossip that serves your life zero purpose. Negativity causes stress. While we all handle stress differently, the buildup of stress can lead to serious anxiety and depression. When you begin to have these unexplainable feelings of pain, worry, doubt or fear, you need to check those feelings at the door. Better said than done- yet, very effective. By controlling your emotions with a natural state of breathing, you have the power to pull yourself from what can result in an emotional reaction.

According to Harvard Health Publications, the relaxation response, developed in the 1970s at Harvard Medical School by cardiologist Dr. Herbert Benson, is a state of profound rest that can be elicited in many ways, including meditation, yoga and progressive muscle relaxation. Meditation and yoga can be tricky and may not work for you. Perhaps working out or tending to your garden helps ease your stress. (Tip: Seriously, do what works for you.)

Ways to Elicit the Relaxation Response

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Mindfulness Meditation

Yoga (and other forms of exercise)

Repetitive Prayer

Guided Imagery

Journaling (my advice. Not from Harvard.)

In order to succeed in the relaxation response, you must find the right technique for you. Don't try too hard at one technique. Try them all and see what best fits your stress level. The overall purpose is to get you to a state of calmness. A place where you can hear your thoughts and in other words "chill." Perhaps something upset you and your initial reaction results in verbal or physical harm. By taking a deep breathe and realizing the original point of your pain or anger can save you friendships, heartbreaks and even your life or the life of a loved one.

Talk therapy is another way to help you heal. Mental health doctors are non-bias and their job is to help you overcome negative

feelings and deal with memories that are hindering you. A major stigma surrounds therapy. People are afraid that friends or family will judge them or the therapist is nosey. If people judge you, that's none of your concern. Therapists will ask leading questions to dig deeper into your perspective and I can assure you that being nosey is not included in their major college courses.

In the past, my therapist asked if I took deep breathes when I felt stressed or overwhelmed. Deep breathing helps you center yourself and hear the silence that lies between your thoughts. It is in that space where you can feel your true self. You may experience a deep sensation in your heart as it beats faster and faster. The feeling is normal and serves as a moment of truth. Taking time to live in the silence between thoughts is essential to the person you want to become. While practicing deep breathes, you are allowing energy to flow inside and outside of you.

Mad & Angry

During my first depressive episode, I felt afraid, overwhelmed, confused, unworthy and anxious. I used prayer as a technique to calm myself down,

but I became angry at God and angry with the world.

The feeling of not belonging can crush a young person's self esteem. For me, my mind daydreamed to hide the confusion but I still ended up in reality of the current day.

In order for me to think semi-straight, I started to take deep breaths. As the air flowed through my lungs, my ears cooled off, a few clouds parted, my heartbeat slowed down and my eyes saw clearer.

Since I have never been a person of anger or confrontation, the overwhelming feelings that depression brought sent me into a craze like never before. Instead of being angry at someone else, I was angry at myself. During college, whenever I felt overwhelmed or had conflict with someone, I remember finding a place alone and talking to myself while breathing slowly. This action allowed me to step out of emotion and understand the situation and my feelings. This was just the beginning. I had no idea that a long journey was ahead of me.

Now, I take deep breaths before I make major decisions and whenever I see conflict, which rarely happens now. I spend time enjoying the trees and the sun during moments of distress or anxiety.

Once you take a breath and slow down, the pieces start to move and come together.

I often think about how people survived stress before stress was defined. Life isn't easy for us and it sure wasn't easy for those before us. Without the distraction of mobile phones and computers, we are able to understand that other people are also human and capable of feeling the exact same way we once did or currently feel. It is important to handle stress in ways that work for you. However, a good start is with taking a deep breath.

Facebook increases people's anxiety levels by making them feel inadequate and generating excess worry and stress.

-Marissa Maldonado, The Anxiety of Facebook

NO LIKES TODAY

256 likes. 34 comments. 3 shares. The adrenaline of acceptance runs through your veins. For each post you eagerly watch the number of likes, hoping more and more people like your carefully angled picture or your thought-provoking copy. It brings joy to see so many people loving the life you are living even though you don't love it. While we think social media doesn't affect us personally, it has changed the way we interact with others and even the way we treat ourselves. The lens of life that we now see through is a man-made camera. Have we

forgotten how to view life through our own eyes?

Note: External validation does not solve your problems or make you feel better in the long run.

The dream. The reality. The sadness.

What is your ideal self-image? Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat have given us an uncensored confidence to display the life we have always wanted to live. You choose what you want people to see and in many cases people see someone that is not really you. This misconception of self leads one prone to depression and anxiety. Valuing oneself or another based on images and only the 'high' points in life is not authentic. You might as well call it a "Hollywood Blockbuster Hit" as we do not see the blood, sweat and tears that go into making a financially successful movie. We see the finished product of everything on television and social media. Most people, including your friends and favorite celebrities, do not post about the rough or irresponsible moments they encounter. Millions of people fill their profiles with spam or perfectly crafted content to portray their lives

as better than yours.

Even though some people are really living a lavish life, seeing success in a photo or snap, is all people need to judge their own lives. People see a life they wish to live yet some have no idea where to start. Thinking about what you don't have now and what you want in the future can sometimes cause anxiety if you aren't careful.

Social media platforms can be very loud and rambunctious with exclamation points filling your brain. It may seem as though everyone is yelling or showing off. Just reading a status can exhaust you. Your brain retains everything you expose it to and if you spend hours scrolling and reading statuses that yell at you, your mind goes haywire. The constant "in your face" updates can lead to feelings of inadequacy.

People turn to social media just like turning on the television. It serves as therapy. You post a photo to show people how "happy" you are and watch the likes rack up. That instant external validation makes you feel better about yourself and your situation. We become addicted to hiding the pain and yearn for the positive comments we receive. This is why you should take a break from social media. A break is not the end of your social life. Nor am I suggesting cutting it off completely. I am recommending you carefully moderate your

intake as it can worsen your sadness. People won't think any less of you if you take a break because they are concerning themselves with the lives of the other hundreds or thousands of people they are following. You don't need to announce your break as that opens up room for judgment that will not allow you to rest-- spending the next few hours looking at the sympathy comments and likes filling up which completely takes away the purpose of your break. You may even end up not taking a break at all which completely makes this chapter irrelevant to your healing.

Reasons you need a social media break

Time

Social media takes up so much time! What you intended on being a quick scroll, turns into two hours of switching between four different apps. Think about what you just accomplished in those two hours... Not much. Only a few double taps and comments. Trust me, if you want to be happy again, you don't have that kind of time.

Same ol Same

More times than not, you are looking at the same content everyday. Most of your friends are not content curators. So, everyday you see their kids, workouts, political statuses, relationship drama (or advice), inspirational quotes, vacation pics... you get the point. It's all the same. You know what to expect when you log on, so why waste your time?

Your self-esteem

You matter. More often than not people compare their lives to others on social media. It's like the new "Keeping up with the Joneses." People no longer compare themselves to the neighbor next door. Instead, the comparison is with celebrities with ridiculous amounts of money and people across the world you may never meet. Do you even know your neighbors name???

Don't forget about the trolls and bullies just lurking to make a negative comment. And you really don't have time to be going back and forth with someone who doesn't know a thing about you over a social media post. My advice: Don't hurt yourself. You are in the exact place you are supposed to be. Don't try to live someone else's

life. Don't pity yourself because you aren't posting "an exciting life." Check yourself when you feel the wave of self-pity and know that you must keep pushing in the *real world* in order to get anywhere.

Privacy

There are several concerns with privacy these days. As people over share, the content remains online forever and unfortunately, there are people in the world who do not have your best interest at heart. They may be looking to steal your photos, find out where you live or worse— stalk or rob you. Employers aren't too shy about looking at your profiles either. Be careful what you post.

Social media has its positive benefits too. It is easier than ever before to find a support group or inspirational account to lift your mood. Awareness surrounding mental health has spread like a wildfire, so know that you are not alone. Just be sure you take some time away from the digital space to focus on what you need most.

Jealousy

Social media helped me put on a front of a great life while slowly ripping my self-esteem to shreds.

I wanted people to think I was doing pretty well for myself. With my own thought provoking copy, I felt that people actually cared enough about me to like a photo or two. The problem came with seeing everyone so happy and flourishing. Every Facebook or Instagram post from a friend or stranger felt like they were dancing in my face about how wonderful their life was.

Pinterest was the best place for me to dream and escape from other people. The beautiful homes, fashionable outfits, cute babies and recipes helped me hope for the future. The downside was knowing I wasn't close to living the life I pinned.

I posted soul searching captions on Instagram and made sure to capture the moments during a happiness high. The captions served as my inner self trying to motivate my external self to come back inside. I wanted to take my own advice and love myself, but the pain of the world sat too firmly in my heart. Sometimes it took a few hours to craft the right words. That seems a little self-centered, but deep in my sub-conscience the goal was to look back on that caption when I felt sad. It was meant to empower the future me.

“We all get to a place where we realize it’s time to break free. A place where we unhook the straps off our shoulders and wrists from the sand bags we carried around, previously ignorant of the action of unhooking and the

thought of walking without them. We begin to walk bolder, stronger and our minds become wiser about what lies ahead— A whole life that is greater than we ever imagined. Stay true to God. Believe in yourself. Live the best life you can. Be #free #peace #love” - Instagram 6/8/2014

I often went into a downward spiral after posting a picture. Sad. Angry. Vulnerable. I knew people had no idea how I truly felt and it felt like a lie. I encouraged people to believe and push forward, yet I did not believe. The anger of my reality caused my ears to get hot and my chest to pant heavily. I attempted to take deep breaths and to help clear my mind I deleted all the social media apps on my phone. After the smoke cleared, which took anywhere from one week to three months, I downloaded them all again. The cycle repeated for over two years.

Social media fueled my anxiety and embarrassment. It caused me to seek external validation and compare myself to others. The shame and envy pushed me into a deeper level of depression. Ultimately I took a year away from social media. During that time, I found joy in other activities such as writing and working to improve my overall well being. The elimination of such a massive distraction is what continued my journey of self-discovery and allowed me to find my soul.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicole J Soule was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan.

Over the last five years, through ups and downs, Nicole used writing as an outlet and began developing a novel. After receiving news that a friend committed suicide, she decided to take a break from the novel and *Fade Out Of Sadness* was born. She felt it was time to help raise awareness for mental health by sharing her own experiences. She enjoys spending time with her partner, her dog Nala, and is still working on her first novel. She also enjoys traveling and trying new wine.

Permissions

Everyday Health, <http://www.everydayhealth.com/depression/is-your-sadness-normal.aspx>
Oxford Mindfulness Centre, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, <http://mbct.co.uk/about-mbct/>
Harvard Health Publication- March 2016 <http://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/relaxation-techniques-breath-control-helps-quell-errant-stress-response>