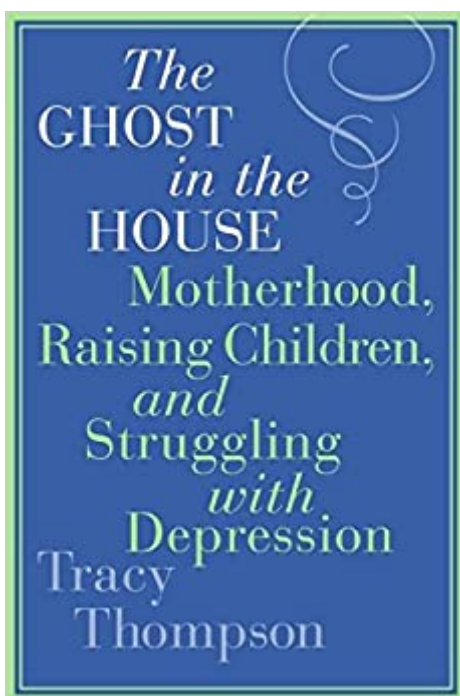


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# The Ghost In The House: Motherhood, Raising Children, And Struggling With Depression



## Synopsis

An award-winning reporter for the Washington Post, Tracy Thompson was thirty-four when she was hospitalized and put on suicide watch during a major depressive episode. This event, the culmination of more than twenty years of silent suffering, became the point of departure for an in-depth, groundbreaking book on depression and her struggle with the disease. *The Beast* shattered stereotypes and inspired countless readers to confront their own battles with mental illness. Having written that book, and having found the security of a happy marriage, Thompson assumed that she had learned to manage her illness. But when she took on one of the most emotionally demanding jobs of all—being a mother—depression returned with fresh vengeance. Very quickly Thompson realized that virtually everything she had learned up to then about dealing with depression was now either inadequate or useless. In fact, maternal depression was a different beast altogether. She tackled her problem head-on, meticulously investigating the latest scientific research and collecting the stories of nearly 400 mothers with depression. What she found was startling: a problem more widespread than she or any other mother struggling alone with this affliction could have imagined. Women make up nearly 12 million of the 19 million Americans affected by depression every year, experiencing episodes at nearly twice the rate that men do. Women suffer most frequently between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four—not coincidentally, the primary childbearing years. *The Ghost in the House*, the result of Thompson's extensive studies, is the first book to address maternal depression as a lifelong illness that can have profound ramifications for mother and child. A striking blend of memoir and journalism, here is an invaluable resource for the millions of women who are white-knuckling their way through what should be the most satisfying years of their lives. Thompson offers her readers a concise summary of the cutting-edge research in this field, deftly written prose, and, above all, hope.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Washington Post reporter Thompson wrote about her experience of depression as a young woman in *The Beast*. Now she shares her experiences as a mother struggling with depression, mirrored in her childhood memories of her own mother's depression. All of this is filtered through research about the role of this cycle in families. Meandering anecdotes from the author and a survey of 400 mothers conducted by Sherryl Goodman of Emory University serve as both a strength and weakness of the book; they're instructive, but the various voices become confusing at times. Further, Thompson cites only evidence that "validates" her conclusions. And she may be too close to her subject. Yes, motherhood is daunting and difficult, but not every overwhelmed mother is depressed, as Thompson seems to imply. The information Thompson offers on depression (symptoms such as withdrawing and hyperirritability) and coping ("faith, friends, feeling like a child") will help guide and support readers. Sporadic emphasis on how children are affected includes an account of a young boy whose migraines are linked to his mother's depression, and another suggesting that one mother never learned healthy parenting skills because of childhood experiences with her depressed mother. Taken cautiously, this book offers support for those in the midst of struggling. (Aug. 1) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Thompson manages to integrate multiple perspectives, demonstrating how children respond to and internalize their mother's depression.... (Library Journal) In this vital book, Thompson achieves the same level of nuanced insight that made *The Beast* so compelling. (Andrew Solomon, author of *The Noonday Demon*) A moving and deeply personal account.... Thompson, a wonderful writer, shows how maternal depression can be managed and even overcome. (Ann Crittenden, author of *The Price of Motherhood*) [The Ghost in the House is a] compelling mixture of memoir and researchâfascinatingâa welcome opening statement designed to get people talking.â (Boston Globe)

Thompson is to be commended for giving so many mothers who suffer from postpartum depression

a voice. The women who speak here offer a painfully honest and insightful look at how this disease affects families from a non-clinical perspective. As the author points out, there is a taboo against admitting that you have anything but warm maternal feelings for your little one, and readers of this book who have felt similarly will appreciate the anecdotes gathered. However, I wish there had been more discussion of solutions to combat this problem on more than just an individual level.

Discussion of social change would have been encouraging, at least briefly, but perhaps that was beyond the book's scope.

This book is awesome for any woman, especially a mother that is suffering from depression. It has helped me immensely in my relationship with myself, my mother, and my daughter.

Anyone who has suffered from depression and is a mother must read this book. Who knew that a book about depression would be uplifting. The author interviewed other women that have suffered from depression and anxiety. It makes you realize that you are not alone! Millions of other women like you are out there. The number one lesson is to get help!

If I hadn't seen an ongoing discussion with the author online and heard about this book, I probably would not have picked it up since I do not suffer much from depression. But the discussion has sparked an interest and since I do have relatives that suffer from depression, I was intrigued enough to read it. The topic may sound off-putting but I can honestly say that this is one of the best laid-out and well-written books I have read in a long time. From the very first paragraph, Thompson grabs the reader's attention and holds it till the last page has been turned. Even then, you're finding yourself wishing that you have a little bit more money in your pocket to buy this book for all the women in your life. (And some for the men to better understand their wives!) This is a book that explains a taboo subject. It explores Post-Partum depression (not as thoroughly as other books may have) but also, maternal depression, which I will admit that I have never heard of. But the stories of individuals in this book have made it real and something noteworthy to explore. Thompson has made a concise exploration into this study. She makes the issue personal since she does suffer from depression. Her stories and other women's stories have given maternal depression a name and I never realized that it was so common till I read this book. She gives the reader a better understanding about depression, what kind of help you can get now and there is even a chapter on rat/monkey studies that is very interesting. This is science mixed in with intimate details. It is a book that teaches you something new and makes it interesting. It makes you pause in reflection and

gives you a better understanding on what maternal depression really is. It helps maybe to feel a little bit less alone in this struggle and for me, it does help me understand those in my family who suffers from depression a bit more. This book really should be read by everyone to shed a little bit more light on a dark disease of the mind.9-10-06

The first thing that struck me about this book was the title, specifically "struggling with depression". Thank you. As I fight my way back up for the fourth time since becoming a mother, the last thing I need is another chirpy book about "overcoming", "beating", or otherwise banishing depression forever. This is the first book I've seen that acknowledges that, for at least some of us, it is a life-long fight. Some reviewers have suggested that it's very upsetting to know that our depression is going to have a profound effect on our children. Perhaps that's why this is the first time it's been addressed truthfully. I KNEW it was impacting my family, but not one single Doctor would admit it and help me find a way to minimize the damage. It's ridiculous to think that anything that causes a mother to suffer this deeply doesn't affect her family. I found this book quite hopeful on two levels. The personal stories and interviews demonstrate that experiences I thought were mine alone are not unique. The people who had the courage to share also prove that this illness can be managed. What has been managed can be managed, and I am not alone in trying to find the right set of tools and skills. The other level that I find hopeful is the amount of research the author cites. There are people out there trying to figure this thing out. The cliché of "the first step is admitting there is a problem" is a cliché because it's true. As a culture we need to admit that Depression exists, many more people have it than we think, and it has a deep and lasting impact on our families and society at large. This book has the potential to be a big first step.

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