

# SMILING DEPRESSION

## 微笑憂鬱

*Not all depression looks the same. Some people with depression maintain successful careers and social lives, but the smiles on the surface hide an inner black hole of self-loathing. Psychotherapist Hung Pei-Yun explains the inner mechanisms of smiling depression, while teaching effective ways to develop greater self-acceptance and understanding.*

When we think of depression we imagine someone crying in a corner, all tears and frowns. The reality is, the more positive a person's presentation, the more likely they are to be suppressing their most intolerable feelings. In the case of smiling depression, the state of depression is successfully hidden away behind a mask of positivity. The sufferer appears content and successful, but feels intense self-loathing and hopelessness on the inside.

In the current era of social media, which rewards positive thinking and proactive lifestyles, people feel pressured to create a positive image online. This kind of culture makes it difficult to accept our imperfect selves, to the point where we fear the gaze of others. To deal with smiling depression, we have to learn to go easy on ourselves, and to honestly face the vulnerability and fear inside us, so we can slowly transform our inner state towards one of self-acceptance.

*Smiling depression* manifests at the societal level in the increasing number of celebrity suicides. Starting from these well known cases, *Smiling Depression* moves into the issues we face in the various roles we play in life, revealing the origins of depression, and how it can develop unnoticed. Practical tips for those suffering from smiling depression include: learning not to hide your sorrow, finding safe places to express yourself, and seeking help when needed.

Clinical psychologist Hung Pei-Yun explores the issue of smiling depression from the perspective of the social environment and the relationship between outside expectations and our inner psychological



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states. She pays special attention to the unique challenges faced by gifted children, managers and bosses, members of the LGBT community, men who have difficulty with emotional expression, and members of the “sandwich generation” who have to juggle the twin responsibilities of raising children and caring for elderly parents.

## Hung Pei-Yun 洪培芸

Hung Pei-Yun is a psychotherapist in private practice with specializations in relationships, mental disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, and personal exploration and growth. She regularly appears on Taiwanese television to speak about psychological issues, and the rights to her book *Interpersonal Exploitation: Why We Have Trouble Leaving the Poisonous People in Our Lives* have been sold for publication in China and South Korea. Hung Pei-Yun holds an MS in clinical psychology from Chung Yuan Christian University.