

Message from contributing author, Dr. Emily Dewhurst, MD

Embarrassment. Shame. Humiliation. Terror. Doubt. All of these emotions are ones that we shy away from. We suppress any thoughts coloured with such emotions, and banish them into the corners of our minds to gather dust, hoping they will eventually disappear. Sometimes these feelings reach out from the ignominy of those dark spots; cold, gritted hands that grasp and pull at the sunshine in our lives and threaten to snuff it out. But again, we suppress.

A classmate of mine was the first to mention the concept of dark spots to me. We were discussing an ethical dilemma in medicine, and she raised some thoughts that made her feel uncomfortable. She emphasized the importance of bringing the dark spots into the light, forcing them to be seen, to allow us to learn from ourselves. For if we do not shine a light on the darkness of our minds, how then can we grow?

Living in a mind that is tarnished by depression has forced me to simultaneously live in a swirling wind of dark spots and become an expert at suppressing them. After all, patients don't want a doctor that can't handle her own emotions. And clinical instructors don't want a student with anxiety or scars all over her arms.

When I met Dr. Profetto, and he asked so openly and unashamedly about my experiences with self-harm, I was surprised to feel so refreshed. To have a mentor that would not judge me for my struggles, but continue to teach and encourage me to

grow as a clinician, was life altering. Dr. Profetto helped me to transform this darkness into a guiding light for patients struggling with similar issues.

At first, I was hesitant to write a contribution to this book. Once my chapters were written I even toyed with the idea of publishing anonymously. But then, who would I be? What would the purpose of these chapters be? We all have dark spots. I hope that reading about mine will crack open the cobwebbed doors of your mind and shed some light on yours.