

Crushed: A Journey Through Depression by Linda Bjork

Questions for discussion

- 1 When we have difficult circumstances in our lives, it's natural to search for a "bad guy" to blame for our problems. In this story there are no actual "bad guys," just people doing the best they can to meet their own needs. Have you ever had an experience where you perceived someone as a "bad guy" in your life and later learned to see things from his or her perspective and it changed your perception and understanding of him or her?
- 2 How is searching for the root of the problem different than searching for someone to blame?
- 3 What did the author mean by "my reality is validated"? [p.24] What actions do we take or not take to validate our perception of reality?
- 4 The author talks about how familiarity is comfortable. What kinds of things in our lives might not be good, but we don't seek to change because they are comfortable? [p. 26]
- 5 The author describes an experience of longing for death to end her pain. [p. 27-28] What influences her decision to carry on? How do our decisions affect other people?
- 6 How did the author initially respond to the invitation to learn about ways to heal and become happy? [p. 32-34, 44-45] What influenced her to make the decision to attend the women's retreat?
- 7 How did the author respond to her husband's attempt at intervention? [p. 40-42] If you were in his situation, what might you be feeling? What would you do? What would you want to have happen? Why do people resist when others offer to help?
- 8 The author describes feeling like a fraud. [p. 44] What do you think made her feel that way? Have you ever experienced similar feelings?
- 9 The author describes a phone conversation with her sister [p 44-45]. What does he sister say and do that influences the author's decision? How does it affect you when you feel that other people respect and trust your choices? How might that influence your interactions and expectations of others?
- 10 At the women's retreat, Suzanne used an example of a bank account with a balance of positive deposits and negative withdrawals [p. 50]. How do you feel about your current balance in your physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, and social areas of your life? Which areas could use some improvement?

- 11 Can you explain the Law of the Vacuum [p. 50] and how it can inhibit our progress and healing? How can we work in harmony with that law to facilitate and enhance healing and progress?
- 12 Why is it dangerous to say “what’s wrong with me?” [p. 51]
- 13 The author asks herself the question “Which do I want more, to be proactive and heal or to be validated in my misery?” [p. 52] Why is the answer to that question so important? Why is that question hard to answer?
- 14 Suzanne talks about comfort zones and growth zones [p. 52-53]. Why must we step out of our comfort zones in order to grow?
- 15 The author talks about an assignment to write a letter to her body. [p. 56] She actually wrote twice. What did she write on her first attempt? What did she write the second time? Which do you think was a more accurate reflection of her true feelings? What can we do to learn to love our bodies?
- 16 Suzanne taught that our lives need to be centered like clay on a potter’s wheel to keep our relationships healthy and balanced [p. 57]. What does being centered look like to you?
- 17 We often compare ourselves with others to establish our identity [p. 57]. What is the danger with that source? What are some better sources for establishing our identity? What questions did Suzanne suggest to help a person evaluate his or her beliefs about our identity?
- 18 The author talks about having mixed feelings about trying tools she learned about at the women’s retreat [p. 58-59]. Why do you think she had mixed feelings? How do you respond when things don’t work as you hoped or expected? Are you willing to try again?
- 19 Can you describe the Law of the Harvest [p. 61]? What was the author’s initial response to learning about the Law of the Harvest and why do you think she responded that way?
- 20 The book describes different levels of thought: the conscious and the subconscious [p. 62-63, 68]. Can you describe the role of the subconscious and how it builds its programs? What kinds of faulty programs might your subconscious be running? How can we upgrade those programs?
- 21 The author realizes that she has lost her voice [p. 64-65]. Why do you think she didn’t notice it before and what did she want after she realized that it was missing? How might recognizing a problem be the first step toward healing?

- 22 What techniques did Erika use to let go of negative emotions? What techniques did she use to add positive energy? [p. 64-66]
- 23 Suzanne gives step by step instructions on how to do a “complete conversation.” [p. 68-69-71] Why do you think saying sorry and asking for forgiveness are crucial components to healing?
- 24 What warning did Suzanne teach through the object lesson of the ping pong balls? [p. 71] Did Linda’s journey to healing include any “ping pong balls”? [p. 151-165] How do you think knowing that this is a part of the process affected her actions and results?
- 25 What do you think Suzanne meant when she said “Your mess is your message”? [p. 72] What experiences have you had that might be a gift to help others?
- 26 What feelings, emotions, and memories were triggered in the author when Suzanne asked everyone to dance? [p. 73-74] Are there things that you once enjoyed that you no longer do? What might happen if you did more of what you love?
- 27 Suzanne taught about four energy types: air, water, fire, and earth. [p. 75-79] How might it be helpful to understand that significant people in your life may have a different energy type than you?
- 28 Suzanne shared some challenges that often arise in communication [p. 80-82] Why is communication often a problem in relationships? Are there ways to improve communication?
- 29 How is forgiving like “letting me off the hook”? [p. 81-83] Why do you think it is often so hard to forgive others? What benefit do you think you might receive by offering forgiveness to others?
- 30 What does “if you spot it, you got it” mean? [p. 84-85] If we feel critical and annoyed with the people around us what might that be witnessing about ourselves?
- 31 What tools and laws did Suzanne utilize to help make her dream of creating a women’s retreat become a reality? [p. 85-87] What tools and laws might you use to realize your dreams?
- 32 What metaphors/examples did Jamie use to explain some of the causes of depression and hope for a brighter future? [p. 89-93] How can metaphors and object lessons help us better understand ourselves and our potential?
- 33 Jamie recommended taking two specific actions each day to move yourself towards your goal [p. 92] What are your goals and desires? What action steps can you take to move yourself towards your goals and desires?

- 34 What is a distinction between progression and simply being busy? [p. 92] What perceived benefit do we get from being busy? How can being busy be a detriment to our progression in what is really important in our lives?
- 35 What was the author's initial response to Suzanne and Jamie's offers for further training and why did she respond that way? [p. 93-96] What made her change her mind? How do our attitude and perceptions affect what we are willing to try?
- 36 The author describes her initial attempt at a complete conversation [p. 97-100]. With whom would you like to have a complete conversation with and why? How do you think it might benefit you? What kinds of obstacles might prevent a person from wanting to take that step?
- 37 The author describes her initial attempt at saying declarations or affirmations [p. 100-101]. How do you think she felt about the experience? Why do you think she believed or disbelieved the things she said about herself? What things do you believe about yourself? Why do you believe those things? What would you like to believe about yourself? Why does it make a difference what you believe about yourself? Do you believe that it is possible to change the way you believe about yourself, why or why not? What obstacles might interfere with making those changes?
- 38 Did you notice a change in the author's perception as Suzanne introduced their mother? [p. 102-103] What do you think enabled that change in perception? How do you perceive the important people in your life? How might it affect our relationships with others if we're willing to accept that there might be more to the story or another way to look at people?
- 39 How might it be beneficial in relationships to understand that opposite may mean harmonious, compatible, corresponding and complete? [p. 103]
- 40 Have you had any opposition in your life that helped you progress and become stronger? [p. 103-104] In what ways can experiencing opposition in your life help you appreciate the good things that you have in your life?
- 41 What changes did you notice in the author from the time of the beginning of the women's retreat to the end? [p. 47-106] What did she do to continue the momentum on the path of healing? What can you do to begin and continue momentum on a path of healing?
- 42 The author describes her thoughts and feelings about people trying to "fix" her. [p. 107-108] How might understanding the thoughts and feelings of a struggling person help us in our approach to offering help? What kinds of things worked and why? What kinds of things didn't work and why?

- 43 What tools and techniques did the author try on her own to continue with the momentum of healing and progression? [p. 108-109] Do you think her efforts were successful? Why or why not?
- 44 The author expressed feelings of failure and embarrassment because she needed the help of another person. [p. 113] Why do you think she felt that way? Are you willing to receive help from others, why or why not? How might you be benefited by allowing others to help you?
- 45 At the author's first mentoring appointment, her mentor taught her about the possibility of hitting a wall [p. 114-22]. Did the author hit a wall? How did she get past it? How might it have been different if the author didn't understand that this might happen? What tools can you use to get past your walls?
- 46 The author's mentor gave her assignments that she felt uncomfortable and awkward doing [p. 114-122]. Why do you think she did that? Was the author benefitted by doing those uncomfortable and awkward assignments? Do you think you might benefit by trying tools and techniques even though they feel uncomfortable and awkward? Are you willing to try?
- 47 The author says, "I just wanted to give up." [p. 122] Why do you think she felt that way? Have you ever felt like giving up? How does our response to those feelings affect our lives, our happiness and our progression?
- 48 The author describes feeling shame. [p. 123] Why do you think she felt that emotion? Shame is very different from guilt. Guilt is remorse that "I did something bad" whereas shame is a belief that "I *am* bad." Guilt allows us to separate ourselves from our actions, but with shame we define ourselves by our actions. Can guilt ever serve us in a positive way? Can shame ever serve us in a positive way? How can we let go of feelings of shame?
- 49 The author's mentor describes a tendency to try to fix everything and make everybody happy. [p. 123-124] Do you think that is a positive attribute or a negative attribute and why? How might it benefit you to trust that other people are capable of making their own decisions about life?
- 50 The author says, "I can't imagine a reality where I don't feel worthless, unimportant and unlovable" [p. 125] Why do you think that such a scenario would be frightening? Do you have beliefs, situations, relationships, and/or patterns that, although they might not be good, are familiar and therefore feel "safe"? What can we do to open our minds to other possibilities?

- 51 The author says, "I failed again today." [p. 125] Do you feel that her perception was accurate and why? Do you see evidence of progress even though she might not have recognized it? Do you think if you looked at your life through the eyes of another you might see more than you currently realize? How might enlarging your perspective benefit you?
- 52 The author struggled with insecurity and comparing herself with others. [p. 129-130, 138-139] What recommendations did her mentor give to overcome those issues? Do you struggle with insecurity and comparing yourself with others? What are you willing to do to overcome those issues?
- 53 What tools did the author's mentor recommend to help her feel safer? [p. 130-132] What difference does it make in our lives when we feel safe? What makes you feel safe? What can you do to increase your feelings of safety?
- 54 What did the author's mentor mean by "the fruit doesn't look like the root"? [p. 132] How might it help to identify the roots of our problems? What tools and techniques can we use to discover the roots of our problems?
- 55 The author's mentor promised her that people would treat her differently as she changed. [p. 133] How do you think the way we feel about ourselves affects how other people treat us?
- 56 Why do you think the author respond by saying, "I could never say that, it's not true" [p. 133-136]. Can you explain how our subconscious affects our belief system? Can you explain tools and techniques to get past the reticular activating system (RAS)?
- 57 Can you explain how different pathways of thought are like roads? [p. 136] Which thought processes in your mind are like well-traveled highways? Would it benefit you to create new roads?
- 58 The author was baffled by the discovery that she was feeling both worthless and prideful. [p. 138-139] Why do you think she had those conflicting feelings? Do you think there a better way to meet our needs?
- 59 The author talks about trying to reconnect with service again. [p. 141-143] How does serving others help us?
- 60 What evidence do you notice that things are beginning to improve and change? [p. 140-144]
- 61 Humiliation, unworthiness, invisibility and worthlessness were the longstanding blueprint for the author's identity. [p. 146-148] How does our blueprint affect what we

think about ourselves? What is your blueprint for your identity? What tools and techniques can we use to create a new blueprint for our identity?

- 62 What excuses did the author use to justify not doing the things she didn't want to do? [p. 149-150] What excuses do you use to justify not doing the things you don't want to do?
- 63 What tools and techniques did the author use to uncover some of the roots of her problems and let them go? [p. 151-165] Was a single tool sufficient or did it require multiple tools?
- 64 The author asks herself a question, "Did I want to heal or did I want to be validated in my anger?" [p. 164] Why is the answer to this question so important? Why do you think letting go is a necessary part of healing? What things make it difficult to let go?
- 65 How does anger provide a false sense of power and justice? [p. 164-165] How can letting go of anger serve us?
- 66 Even after experiencing much success and progress, the author hit another wall and wanted to give up. [p. 166-170] Why do you think she felt that way? Why do you think it's important to keep going in spite of setbacks?
- 67 The author's mentor talked about the principle of giving and receiving. [p. 168-170] How does that differ from the author's expectation of the "happy doormat" scenario? [p. 184] Why do you think it is important to learn how to receive? What beliefs make us resistant to receiving?
- 68 Can you describe what happened when the author tried to visualize a meeting with her higher power? [p. 171-175] Why do you think she responded the way she did?
- 69 Can you describe the different perceptions about crying that the author and her mentor shared? [p. 175] How do you feel about crying?
- 70 The author tells her daughter, "Your Aunt Suzanne was mean to me..." [p. 182-183] Why do you think she was feeling that way? Do you think Suzanne was being mean or was she being helpful? How do you feel when someone asks you to do something that is hard for you?
- 71 The author says, "I was tired of everything being my fault." [p. 184] Why do you think she felt that way? Why is it both frightening and empowering to understand your role in the creation of and solution to your problems?
- 72 Why did the author plan to use a pen name for her book? [p. 184-185] How might it be a benefit to herself and to others to claim her own experiences?

- 73 The author's first attempt to complete her assignment to write a letter to God and write down his answer did not go as she hoped. [p. 188-191] What did she do differently that helped her be able to receive? Why do you think that helped?
- 74 The author braved sharing her heart with her husband. [p. 192-193] Why do you think that was so difficult for her? How do you think this sharing might affect their relationship? Is there a relationship in your life that would benefit by increased trust and sharing?
- 75 The author talks about two different states of being which she calls "broken" and "crushed" and later mentions that she started on her journey to overcome her crushing blow, but it also healed her brokenness [p. 194]. What does "broken" look like? What does it feel like? Is there anything about brokenness that can provide a positive benefit? What does "crushed" look like? What does it feel like? Is there any aspect of being crushed that provides a positive benefit?
- 76 The author's mentor says, "... you are awesome. I can't wait until you see it." [p. 181, 194] What do you think the significance is of the author saying, "I am beginning to believe her"? Why do you think would that make a difference? Do you believe that you are awesome? What difference would it make in your life if you believed that?
- 77 Can you describe the analogy of leaving Emerald City? [p. 195-196] How is it helpful to recognize that we may not always see things as they really are? How is it helpful to recognize that others may not always see things as they really are?
- 78 Can you describe the significance of the analogy of the "fake ending"? [p. 197-202] How is it helpful to realize that there isn't an "ending" but that life is a continual progression?
- 79 How do you feel about the author's statement, "Once people have seen me for what I really am, I cannot pretend to be anything else" [p. 200]. Do you think it takes courage to allow people to see you as you really are? What do you think are the benefits of allowing people to see you as you really are?
- 80 What were some of the negative consequences that the author experienced because she shared her story with others? [p. 203-205] Why is it so scary to make ourselves vulnerable? What benefits are there to allowing ourselves to be vulnerable? How can we continue to feel safe when we are authentic and therefore vulnerable?
- 81 Why do you think the people closest to us are often the ones who try to hold us back? [p. 204-205]
- 82 How was the author benefited by her mentor's determination to go forward and do what she felt inspired and driven to do? [p. 205] How have you benefited by the

author's determination to go forward and do what she felt inspired and driven to do? How might you benefit others by going forward and doing what you have been inspired and driven to do?

- 83 The author ends the book in an unconventional way; she signs it with her name like the closing of a letter [p. 205]. Why do you think she did it that way? What significance might that have to her and to you?
- 84 In the epilogue the author says, "As I read through this journal, it is as if I am reading about a stranger." [p. 206] Why do you think she might feel that way?
- 85 The author says, "I always knew that illness could spread, but I did not know that healing could spread." [p. 204] Who do you think might benefit from your healing and progression?
- 86 The author says, "I didn't have a clue how to do that, but I did it anyway." [p. 206] What things might you be capable of doing, that you don't currently know how to do? Who might be benefited by your moving forward?
- 87 What is the danger of craving praise and recognition from others as a source of value and self-worth? [p. 207] Why doesn't it work? What might be a better source of validation?
- 88 What is the message in the song "You Are Loved" by Stars Go Dim? Why do you think the author shares this song as her concluding message?
- 89 At what point do you think the author had worth and deserved love? At what point do you think she believed she had worth and deserved love? What difference does it make when we believe that we have worth and deserve love?