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Brooke Shields: 'How I Survived Depression'

Brooke Shields described the depths of her struggle with postpartum depression, saying, "All I wanted to do was disappear and die."

See exclusive photos of Brooke Shields

The 44-year-old actress shared her fight against the disease -and the stigma that surrounds it -- after receiving an advocacy award from the Hope for Depression Research Foundation on Monday in Manhattan. Shields, who wrote about her journey through depression in the book "Down Came the Rain," told the audience she felt her life was meaningless after the birth of her first daughter.

Slideshow: Celebrity moms and daughters

"[I thought] I should not exist. The baby would be better off without me. Life was never going to get better -- so I better just go," she said, according to People. "We think and we feel that we should just be able to handle it on our own."

Shields has two daughters, Rowan, 6, and Grier, 3. After a miscarriage and seven IVF attempts, she gave birth to Rowan in 2003 with her husband, TV writer Chris Henchy. "I finally had a healthy beautiful baby girl and I couldn't look at her," she said. "I couldn't hold her and I couldn't sing to her and I couldn't smile at her ... All I wanted to do was disappear and die."

She consulted a doctor for help and was diagnosed with a chemical imbalance. "I learned what was going on inside my body and what was going on inside my brain. I learned I wasn't doing anything wrong to feel that way. That it was actually out of my control," she said. "I didn't [fight] at first -- but finally I did. I survived "

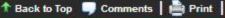
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