

Praise for *Shattering*

Marcie Jones is an exceptional writer. The story is beautifully told. She really knows how to involve the reader.

—Dr. Ken West
Professor Emeritus of Counseling and Human Development,
University of Lynchburg

Shattering is wonderful. It is well written and will be a comfort for families going through similar trials.

—Gretchen Fincke, LCSW, CST
Psychotherapist

I am so moved by *Shattering*. It's a powerful memoir of a mother's undying love, faith, family, challenges, and the profound human spirit. I was compelled from page to page, not wanting to take breaks. This book is powerful and relevant to many families who have walked similar troubling paths. It provides inspiration and dedication to faith and connection.

—Joan Marineau, CAP
Licensed Mental Health Counselor

What an amazing journey outlined in an emotional outpouring of love, faith, and support. I was deeply moved by the intense love of family and friends. Hunter is lucky to have Marcie as his mom and to have a family dedicated to supporting him.

I believe all things happen for a reason, although we cannot see it at the time. Marcie's willingness to share her story—just like her willingness in the depths of pain to sit with, hold hands with, listen to, and pray with Simone in the hospital family room—will touch someone and give them the strength and hope to make it through their challenges. I love Marcie's connections to Bible verses and to words of encouragement.

—Dr. Martha J. Eagle
Division Superintendent of Schools
Nelson County Public Schools, Virginia

Shattering is a gripping, compelling, and intimate narrative about the ultimate parenting challenge of living with the outcomes of a child's mental health issues. This is a must-read for anyone experiencing unsettling and seemingly insurmountable circumstances. Marcie Jones's compassionate memoir illustrates how family, faith, and perseverance transform tragedy into wins through small gains one day at a time.

—Ann M. Martin
Retired School Library Administrator
Past President, the American Association of School Librarians

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Marcie S. Jones

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This book is a memoir. It reflects the author's present recollections of experiences over time. Some events have been compressed, and some dialogue has been recreated. The names *Simone* and *Marie* were used to protect those individuals' identities. All other names in this book are real and are used with permission.

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A story from my heart for those in my heart . . .

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Prologue

I'm shattering.
Day by day.

Breath by breath.

Heartbeat by heartbeat.

Just like the windshield.

The windshield on which my son threw himself in an effort to end his anguish and his life.

I still see the patterns that his head left on the glass. I still see him running. I see him picking his long, lean body off the lush summer grass and slamming his head into the tinted safety glass only to bounce off like an old-fashioned rubber ball.

That day, I stood alone, shocked, with one thought in my mind:
What should I do?

I knew with certainty that whatever happened next would be worse.
It was.

Chapter 1

The back door snapped shut behind me with a click as I hurried out of the crisp fall air to embrace the warmth of our kitchen.

“Boo, I’m home,” I called to my husband.

The ringing phone drowned out his response.

The words on Caller ID read *Hawaii*.

A niggles of anxiety wrapped around my heart as I picked up the phone. Our middle son lived on the Big Island, but he never called midweek.

I listened intently as a stranger’s voice said, “Hi, Marcie, this is Charlie. Your son Hunter works for me.”

Charlie owned Wailapa Farms, the organic coffee plantation where Hunter worked. He was teaching Hunter valuable lessons in how to raise the best Kona coffee on the island. Hunter always spoke highly of Charlie. He clearly admired him as a professional and a friend.

My mind tried to focus on Charlie’s words about erratic behavior, a downward spiral, and rants about bees. They made no sense.

By the time Charlie got to “rushed to Kona Community Hospital,” my husband was standing beside me, looking perplexed and concerned. After hanging up, I repeated as much of the phone conversation as I could recall, then dialed the number Charlie had just given me.

That was when I learned something that tore at my heart even more than the reality that Hunter had been admitted to the hospital.

The nurse would not provide more information about his condition. HIPAA laws prevented it.

“Please, we are thousands of miles away. Can’t you tell me anything?” I begged.

“I can’t without his permission,” the nurse replied. She sounded empathetic. “I can tell you he is here and that we will try to get him to sign the HIPAA form so we can release information to you.”

That night was one of the longest in my life.

It was difficult enough to learn that Hunter was having a mental health crisis, but now I had to tell his brother and sister, Michael and Bridget. Our children were adults, yet their pain cut into my soul as I shared the news and tried to soothe them long distance.

As my husband and I prepared for bed, we prayed fervently for Hunter. We asked God to comfort Michael and Bridget and give us guidance for how to help our son. The night brought little sleep, but Boo and I managed to drag ourselves out of bed and to work. That day felt even longer than the night before. As an administrator at a small Christian school, I had office duties and teaching responsibilities. How would I keep my middle and high school students on track with their grammar and literature classes without falling apart? I needed to tell my parents about Hunter and keep Michael and Bridget updated. But most importantly, I had to talk to Hunter. St. Paul’s advice in 1 Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing” (ASV) became the glue that held me together as I put one foot in front of the other and kept going.

The nurse I’d talked to the night before finally called.

“Mrs. Jones, Hunter has signed the HIPAA papers.” The knot in my heart loosened a tiny bit, and I let out a breath I didn’t realize I’d been holding. Finally, I could get some answers. Because of his precarious mental condition, Hunter couldn’t talk to me yet, but knowing about his condition provided a degree of solace. *Thank you, Lord*, I prayed.

Holding back tears, I rapidly scribbled notes as the nurse described the state in which Hunter had been brought to the emergency room. He’d arrived covered in bee stings, severely dehydrated, malnourished, and hallucinating. He thought he had implants in his teeth and that they were picking up transmissions. Blood tests revealed marijuana in his system. The nurse explained that the cannabis on the island was particularly potent and might have been laced with a hallucinogenic.

She said Hunter's psychotic break was so severe that it required a sedative injected into his leg and eleven hospital staff to remove him from the truck he arrived in. That image alone shook me to my core. Growing up, Hunter had rarely been aggressive. He had decked a fellow kindergartener on the playground, but only because the boy pushed Hunter's friend off the swing. Other than that, he'd been an easygoing kid.

After hanging up with the nurses, I called Charlie. I still needed to fit the pieces of this puzzle together.

"Hi, Charlie. It's Marcie. I just talked to one of the nurses at the hospital." The words rushed out of my mouth. "How could this happen? Hunter was fine the last time I talked to him. I don't understand."

Charlie, a doctor by profession, recalled the week before Hunter's break.

"Hunter was one hundred percent normal until Sunday afternoon, when I noticed he seemed a little off. By Monday he was confused and anxious. He made inappropriate comments to some mainland visitors, which was out of character for him. By Wednesday he got even worse, and I wondered if he was stressed beyond what he could handle."

As I tried to comprehend all this happening to my son, Charlie continued, "I finally asked him how he was feeling. He told me that something wasn't quite right, but he didn't know what, so I left it alone thinking things would return to normal. They didn't."

By Thursday Hunter's world came crashing down. Now he lay in a hospital and I sat at home helplessly waiting to talk to him.