



*“Suicide victims are not trying to end their life . . .
they are trying to end their pain!!”*

—Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program®

One life lost to suicide is a loss too deep for words. For some people, the pain they feel is so deep and so wide it appears to be unconquerable.

If you are considering suicide, please let my words be close to your heart right now as I say to you: Dear one, do not despair, you are not alone. There is a way out of your pain. You are only one person in the world, but you mean the world to those who love you. Even if you are not in a place right now to know that, it is true.

“The higher something is, the lower it falls. So too, the loftiest revelations are to be found in the lowest places. Therefore, if you find yourself in a place seemingly devoid of anything spiritual—don’t despair.

The lower you are, the higher you can reach.”

—Menachem Schneerson

The dark place you feel is exactly the place for you to search for the spark of light within you. Your pain is the beacon to show you where to direct

your healing. The way to heal is to apply your love like a salve to the place inside that hurts. **ASK FOR HELP.** It's okay to ask for help. There are people who have survived what you are going through. They are looking to find and help you!

HOW DO YOU ASK FOR HELP?

- Go to the resources at the end of this chapter and make a phone call.
- Use the Yellow Ribbon Card.
- Find a friend, teacher, parent, clergy, and ask them to spend time and be with you.

Know that you may not find the right connection on your first try. Keep trying. Some people can't understand where you're coming from. They are afraid or maybe they are just not able to help. Ask and ask until you find the right help.

Know that there are people who care!

Know that the pain will lessen.

Know that healing happens.

SOMEONE WHO CARES

Even if you can't find someone who can understand your pain, you will for sure find someone who CARES.

There are people who have devoted hours of their lives to convince you to hang on, reach out, and get the help you need to make it through to the other side of the pain.

There is a way to break through the pain and get to the other side to see the meaning and purposefulness and value of *you*.

In a seminar a man held up a hundred dollar bill. "Who wants this?" he asked. All hands shot up in the air. He crumpled it up. "Now who wants this?" he asked again. Again, all the participants held up their hands. Next, he threw it on the ground, spit on it and stomped on it. "And now?" he asked. Still, all hands went up.

He went on to tell the participants that they are like that hundred dollars. No matter how crumpled and trampled that bill became, *it held its value*. No matter how down or dark you *feel*, and even if you don't get it *now*, you are valuable.

Some people reading this chapter have lost someone they love to suicide. *If you are grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide*: It is okay and important for you to reach out and ask for help as you grieve. There are ways for you to heal and ways for you to make a difference. There are whole books written for people like you who have survived such a tragic loss. Reach out. Heal yourself, touch another and in so doing you might help another to heal.

“Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.

You wait and watch and work: You don't give up.”

—Anne Lamott, writer

SUICIDE PREVENTION

From the Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program®:

COPING STRATEGIES FOR TEENS

- Try to be open with your feelings.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Consider the importance of spirituality in your life.
- Get involved with after-school activities.
- Accept others' thanks, compliments, and praise.
- Plan your future and set realistic goals.
- Volunteer—you have a lot to offer.
- Exercise regularly and eat right! (Chocolate is good!)
- Read subjects that interest you.
- Laugh and keep your sense of humor!
- Do not tolerate physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from anyone. Get help immediately!

- Seek help if you feel overwhelmed or troubled.
- Needing help is not failing, it is simply being human.

WARNING SIGNS

- Abrupt changes in personality.
- Giving away possessions.
- Previous suicide attempt.
- Use of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Depression. Lack of self-esteem.
- Withdrawal from people, especially close friends, family, and/or favorite activities.
- Change in eating and sleeping patterns.
- Chronic pain.
- Restlessness—inability to concentrate.

RISK FACTORS

- Problems with school or the law.
- Breakup of a romance.
- Unexpected pregnancy.
- A stressful family life. (Having parents who are depressed or are substance abusers. A family history of suicide.)
- Loss of security. Fear of authority, peers, group or gang members.
- Stress due to new situations; beginning at a new school, college, or relocation to a new community.
- Failing in school or failing to pass an important test.
- Major loss of a loved one, a relationship, a home, divorce in the family.
- Sexual orientation or identity. Suicide is two to three times more likely for GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) youth.

LIFE SKILLS

- A well known life skill for saving lives in a fire emergency is: “Stop - Drop - Roll.” The Yellow Ribbon program teaches another vital emergency life skill: “Stay - Listen - Get Help.”
- The Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention® Card explains the skill, instructs the person receiving the card what to do, and helps youth when they are faced with this life threatening situation: the fire inside.
- Another skill is to learn how to couple the warning signs with the risk factors. The combination of these factors increases and intensifies the profile of someone in trouble and needing help.

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention® distributes a card called “*Lifeline*.” You can get them for free. Keep one for yourself if you want and pass the rest on to others. You could make a difference for someone else. Use the contact information at the end of this chapter. If you need to use the card, please use it.

AN INTERESTING EXPERIENCE

I have had an experience that not too many people have had. When I was nineteen, there was a misunderstanding and some friends of mine got false information that I had been murdered! Unfortunately there was someone with the same first name as me from a related organization who had been murdered. A friend of mine in an office across the country heard about it and although she questioned to see if it was me, the answers she got led her to believe it was. She called friends all over the country (and even abroad) who all began to grieve over my death. Someone called my roommate who tried to call me at work several times but my employer would not put them through to me. They began to think maybe something really had happened to me. I heard the whole story when I got home. It was very surrealistic to me. People were calling me up crying. From my point of view, it had been just another day until I was flooded with this emotion from my friends. They were so happy I was alive! It had never occurred to me that someone would grieve if something happened to me. It was a real eye opener.

Everyone is loved. *Even if you don't feel lovable, the people who love you still love you.*

PEACE

Something caught my attention as I did my research for this chapter. As I read the personal accounts of numerous survivors of suicide attempts, I noticed a pattern. Many survivors reported experiencing a feeling of deep peace settling over them as soon as they made the decision to take their lives. But then, in the actual act of attempting suicide, they were shocked by the sensation of unbearable physical pain. The peace they thought they had found turned into pain more intense than anything they had ever experienced.

What is this peace? Is it an illusion? Or is it real? I believe it is both.

When a person makes the decision to commit suicide, what they are doing is deciding to surrender, to let go of their pain. This is the source of the feeling of peace: I'm going to be rid of my pain. The part of this peace that is an illusion is the part that thinks that ending your life is the way to end your pain. When pain has become so devastating in your life that you know you cannot go on living this way, you can make a choice to end your pain, *without ending your life*. That is the true peace.

Let go of your *pain*, not your *life*!

That place of peace is the place of choice. Here is the choice to choose a new life, one that is free of pain. Sometimes we need to hit bottom in order to make a choice to turn, to rise, to return to who we really are. Sometimes we are so stuck in our circumstances, our emotional reality, our day-to-day life—our *stuff*—that we don't even see who we really are.

Healing pain is partly about letting go, surrendering. Once we surrender, we have to choose the direction of our next step. There is no guarantee that the journey will be easy. What has great value does not come without effort and intention.

If you find yourself in that place of peace, consider that you have made a decision to surrender your LIFE OF PAIN. But please don't stop there. Take the next step and CHOOSE LIFE. Choose a new life, because the potential is always there for you. Always.

Choose life, get help, and never give up!

A dear friend of mine who has survived the darkness of being suicidal shared some poetry with me. What I saw and what I want to share with you is that the darkest, coldest winter does give way to spring. If you're willing to trust that the true you is in there ready to come out, like the butterfly in the story at the beginning of the book, your struggle can bring you back to the beauty waiting to fly.

May you be at peace.

May you be free from pain.

May you find comfort and be comforted.

May you find hope and grab onto it for the promise of healing.

RESOURCES

For more information on Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program®, an outreach program of:

Light for Life Foundation International

P.O. Box 644

Westminster, CO 80036-0644

Offices: 303-429-3530 Fax: 303-426-4496

www.yellowribbon.org

email: ask4help@yellowribbon.org

National Crisis Line (Hope Line Network):

1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education. The mission of SAVE is to educate about suicide prevention and to speak for suicide survivors.

www.save.org

BOOKS

Crook, Marion. *Suicide: Teens Talk to Teens*. North Vancouver, BC: Self-Counsel Press, 1997.

Nelson, Richard E., Ph.D., and Judith C. Galas. *The Power to Prevent Suicide: A Guide for Teens Helping Teens*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Free Spirit Pub., 1994.

Shneidman, Edwin S. *The Suicidal Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.