

Teen Suicide

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“Heroes are made, when you make a choice” – *SuperChick*. Consider this quote.

She sits in her room, all alone and quiet. Tears fall from her face, clouding her view of the world around her. Her thoughts come back, reflecting the day’s events; the time she felt she lost her self-esteem and sense of worth when she was called "irresponsible" and "scum". Those words can not speak the pain they caused her. Her father had said those words when he came into the school gym, and those words were what made her feel crushed. Was it because of embarrassment, hurt, lack of trust, or a sense of value and the need to belong? Now all she has left is a diminished, damaged picture of herself. She feels unworthy to be called beautiful and not honored enough to be loved. She thinks that is everyone’s notion of her. However, she has a simple friend who finds her worthy and tells her so, saving her from the death to which she tried to give her life.

Countless teens around the world deal with everyday pressures of life from their

parents, their peers, boyfriends or girlfriends, their after-school jobs, and school. Often times it comes down to the overwhelming realization that they are just teenagers going through life at school and growing up. The pressures come down upon teens harsher than most individuals realize and sometimes it can be a devastating burden that results in some wrong form of thinking pattern in order to cope. These patterns can lead to depression, mental break-downs, substance abuse, and even suicide.

Most teens interviewed after making a suicide attempt say that they tried it because they wanted to escape from a situation that seemed impossible to deal with or to get relief from really bad thoughts or feelings. They did not want to die as much as to escape from what was going on. At that particular moment death seemed like the only way out (<http://www.kidshealth.org>, 12/12/07).

People who end their lives might be trying to escape feelings of rejection, hurt, or loss. Some might be angry, ashamed, or feel guilty about something. Others are worried about disappointing friends or family. Some people feel unwanted, unloved, victimized, or that they are a burden to others. Why does one person commit suicide while another person can put their problems in perspective and deal with them with determination and hope? Why is one person more resilient than another? The answer to those questions is that most people who commit suicide have depression. My question is why is depression so common in teens? Teens are going through a time in life when their moods are constantly changing because hormones and sleep cycles are changing. They are trying to find their place in the world. Teens have many new social, academic, and personal pressures. Teens are vulnerable to depression (<http://www.kidshealth.org>, 12/12/07).

The three most common types of suicide attempts are: firearms, hanging, and

poisoning. These three methods account for 92.3 percent of all suicides. Only about 2 percent of attempts are done through jumping from a building or a bridge (www.suicide.org, 12/12/07).

According to Suicide Prevention, Awareness and Support, the number of suicide deaths in the U.S. are about 30,622 per year. Not only is the number of suicide deaths high but the number of deaths by untreated medical imbalances that cause depression in teens are the highest leading cause of suicide deaths (<http://www.suicide.org>, 12/10/07). The statistics are broken down into specifics. According to Family First Aid, teen suicide is the third leading cause of death in adolescents from the age of 15 to 24. The rate for youth ages 10 to 14 is 1.3 percent. The suicide rate for ages 15 to 20 is 7.9 percent and for ages 20 to 24 the rate jumped to 12 percent in 2000. It is said that every seventeen minutes a suicide is committed. A death is reported every two hours and twelve minutes, with suicide attempts adding up to about 750,000 each year (<http://www.familyfirstaid.org>, 12/11/07).

Many times in my own life I find that certain things do not make sense and I feel hurt and unimportant. Too often I see teens that hide their hurt by saying they are alright. Not only do I know they are hurting but I also know at times they are doing something to ease that pain, whether it is the right or the wrong way for them. Many turn to substance abuse and the use of drugs or patterns of destructive behavior in cutting, eating disorders, and suicide. Those who follow after these patterns usually eventually face the reality that their pain is real and that the ways to ease pain are only temporary fixes. Countless substance abusers are not aware that drugs and alcohol only intensify their depressed state (<http://www.kidshealth.org>, 12/12/07). That is why drug and alcohol users

generally are more probable to be suicidal and commit suicide. They feel guilt and are likely to blame themselves by telling themselves that they deserved what life dealt them through circumstances and relationships. This makes suicide seem the more logical solution to their problems. Suicide removes them from the puzzle of life that is full of confusion and pain.

Not only are the pressures of life contributing to these statistics but so are different emotional conditions affecting children and teens as well. These conditions can be conduct disorder, major depression, learning or attention problems, antisocial personality disorder, and schizophrenia. The loss of friends or loved ones through divorce or death, unemployment, living alone because of current drinking or abusive relationships, moving, or dramatic life altering events after witnessing violent acts or scenes also contribute to emotional defects that can cause suicide. These situations put teens and children at risk for suicidal behavior because of mental and emotional disturbances influencing their bodies. These conditions or situations can cause teens to have trouble learning to cope, to develop destructive behavior, and to lose a sense of self worth. (www.bookrags.com, 12/25/07)

Teens not only deal with the pressures of life but some face the pressures of bullying and abuse, whether sexual, physical, or emotional, as well. Bullying and abuse cause harm to a person's self-esteem if they continue. There are about three million cases of abuse reported each year in the U.S. About four children under the age of four die every day from abuse and a report is made every ten seconds. Nine hundred and six thousand children undergo abuse and neglect each year. One third of the abused and neglected continue the cycle on into their adult life with their own children. The

percentage of deaths from physical abuse is 54 percent and the deaths from neglect are 43 percent. About 80 percent of all those who are abused also suffer from some sort of psychiatric disorder (www.childhelp.org, 12/12/07).

Numerous conditions and circumstances are tied in with suicide attempts and deaths that occur every day. Abuse, pressures of life, substance abuse to ease the pain, and chemical imbalances all often have an end result in suicide. The problem is not how many deaths or how many children are included in these statistics. What matters are the actions of one man or woman who could change one person because they choose to care. In my own life I've dealt with depression but because of my friends I was able to get a realistic and optimistic view about life. Teens are not seen as the real teen, those who have high dreams and goals in life. They are seen as the rebellious generation. As it is said by sociologists some teens live up to this self fulfilling prophecy, but others continue to take the pressure until it is just too much.

One of the biggest myths about suicide is that those who talk about it are only kids who are trying to get attention (www.suicide.org, 12/1207). Never in my life did I think people actually thought that way until I was one of those kids. Coming from the perspective of one teen that has traveled this road like others, I have to say the biggest lie people tell themselves is that what these kids are saying is "just to get attention". Teens who are finding the courage to say the truth are likely those who want to find a way around the pain but find no other solution. People rarely care to take the words seriously and understand their meaning - a teen's call for someone to carry the burden for a while. Teens have a lot of pressure in life and sometimes they need a break from those everyday pressures.

Since 1958 the government has worked to develop new forms of suicide prevention, with the first prevention center opening in Los Angeles. The first research center for suicide prevention was created in 1966.

I think the government is doing a fair job in the research of suicide prevention. The government is creating research centers and opening governmental funded programs to ensure the suicide rate is reduced. There are national and local suicide hotlines that help by being available. I do not think the government really knows of a solution to lower suicide as the third leading cause of deaths in the United States. The certainty that suicide is one of the most complex and mysterious mental issues in America does not help to assure that there is a solution to this problem. Where, what, and how suicide comes about is still a question that remains. While there have been many discoveries concerning suicidal behavior and the warnings and reasons for it developing, there is still the question of whether it can be prevented altogether.

Commonly suicide should not merely be a government project alone. Although there is governmental help for teen suicide I think the main source of help comes from the community. Communities, families and friends are all affected by a loved one who has committed suicide. The prevention and research should be done by communities in the effort to lower death from suicide. Without love and support kids who are suicidal may often see that the reason others are not concerned with them is because those people are concerned with their own lives. However, over-reacting to a suicidal warning may very well produce fear in a teen that either awakens them or pushes them farther toward acting it out. I think subtle ways of handling suicidal threats is by support. In my own experience the thought of making a full blown case with authorities involved over my

way of solving problems scared me enough to be quiet or to stop thinking that way.

Simply the support of friends, family, and my church helped me to change the direction I was heading.

Setting up a governmental funded building that has a support group in larger communities may be an answer we need. Suicide is a dangerous thought and often joked about, but when it comes down to a kid dealing with exactly that issue a sense of security is lost. A place to go where they feel welcome will give kids and teens a sense of support. It will help them know that there is help available if needed. This will allow teens to feel safe and loved because a concern for their well-being will be considered by others. Teens will have a place of refuge away from the fear of being labeled suicidal in public.

We should teach teens and parents to guard what they say to others because what they say can really encourage or discourage another. Everyone should be made aware of the value of life - each and every life. We should learn to respect people through recognizing them as the individual they are and not who we want them to be. Would it be possible to create an incentive program in schools to teach students to treat each other respectfully? People should realize that each person was created by a God who loves them enough to give the life of His Son to save them. If a suicidal person can see that love and feel the kindness and care of those around them, they will be less likely to commit suicide because they know they are loved and important.

"Heroes are made, when you make a choice" - *SuperChick*. A person can be a hero when making the choice to build up another. A person can be a hero by making the choice to live. We should all be heroes or help someone else to be a hero today.

