



THOUGHTS: For Those Whom Suicide Leaves Behind

USED WITH PERMISSION
HOPE FOR BEREAVED

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SUGGESTED READING:

Understanding Suicide, by William Coleman. David Cook Publishing Co.

After Suicide, by John Hewitt. Westminster Press, 1980

When you are ready you can choose to live. It is comforting to know that many survivors recover to lead healthy, energetic lives.

Suicide is the cruelest death of all for those who remain.

It is estimated that as many as 90,000 persons die in the United States annually as a result of suicide.

If each of these persons has eight close relatives or friends that means at least 720,000 people are affected annually.

You are not alone.

The thought of suicide is not foreign to our human lives.

Every study affirms that most people think about suicide some time in their lives.

It is estimated that between 80 percent and 90 percent of us at one time or another thinks about our own suicide.

There may be only a passing thought. Most do not plan the details.

Still, suicide may be considered briefly as an alternative to some of the things that we face in life.

Grief and depressions can bring thoughts of suicide.

A thought of suicide is a human reaction. The act of suicide inflicts extraordinary

pain on people left behind.

In the book *After Suicide*, author John Hewitt states that suicide throws a triple whammy on everyone.

In the first place, a close relative or friend has died.

Secondly, there is the pain and shock of a sudden death.

On top of all that one has to deal with the fact of suicide, with its additional pain and

regret.

The pain will last a long time. You cannot escape from it but you can help it run its course.

The grief associated with suicide has many unresolved doubts:

“What happened?”

“What did I do wrong?”

“Whose fault was it?”

“What could I have done to prevent it?”

“What do we do now?”

When suicide has touched your life, your emotions are intensified to unbelievable and unbearable proportions.

Many survivors deny the death and even more so the method.

A flood of feelings engulf the survivors – shame, anger, guilt, love, self-pity, bewilderment, rejection, self blame, compassion.

Suicide temporarily destroys your good feeling about yourself, about God, about life in general.

Most survivors say that their grief was complicated by severe feelings of guilt. Guilt presents us with a choice. We can either let it ruin our lives or allow it to diminish to the point where the guilt can be handled.

“Children of suicides have a higher than average rate of suicide, not because the tendency toward suicide is biologically inherited, but because they grow up with a heritage of guilt, anger and a sense of worthlessness (*Klagsbur, Too Young To Die*).

Children need to be helped to see that they too have a choice and that they can choose to build happy, well adjusted lives.

Survivors struggle daily with the question, “Why?”

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As one survivor states, 'Ironically, we had no choice when our child died, it was out of our control, but we do have a choice in healing ourselves.'

Suicide is usually caused by many factors that have accumulated over a period of years.

Your child may have been surrounded many times by what seemed like overwhelming internal struggles.

Due to a combination of circumstances it becomes impossible to cope.

There doesn't seem to be any way out.

Hopelessness and despair are common emotions of suicide.

The majority of suicide victims suffer severe depression.

Your child's sense of judgment was lost or distorted.

They were not insane.

Just before suicide the child's judgment becomes hazy, confused.

He/She can't reason themselves out of it.

The child is likely to exercise extremely poor judgment about how they see themselves.

Others may see the many things that he does well. If your child has lost sleep and not eaten, it makes things even worse.

The last straw occurs.

It may have very little to do with the death, but he/she can't hold on any longer.

Quite likely he/she wasn't fully aware of why he/she completed suicide.

It is an escape from something rather than choosing death.

Since we don't know the victim's inner struggle, we can't answer why.

There is much we do not know about suicide but we do know there is a limit to a load any person can bear.

Your child may have turned to suicide because he/she saw no alternative and felt something had to be done.

Survivors should not feel responsible for the suicide.

Suicide is an act completed in solitude and one person is responsible for it – the deceased.

No person can make another person complete suicide.

No person can single handedly prevent a suicide unless that person can live without sleep and spend 24 hours a day restraining the potential suicide.

Your life has been seriously wounded by suicide. Nothing can change that fact.

You have your own timetable for coming out of your extended grief.

When you are ready you can choose to live. It is comforting to know that many

survivors recover to lead healthy, energetic lives.

As one survivor states, "Ironically, we had no choice when our child died, it was out of our control, but we do have a choice in healing ourselves."

It's the hardest task we will ever have to perform."

