

# A Young Persons Guide to ~ Suicide ~



A Peer Counselling Handbook

## Suicide

Suicide is a difficult subject to talk about which conjures up a whole mix of emotions. It is awful to think about death and dying especially when it involves a family member or a young person but when that person has killed themselves it makes it double tragic - twice as distressing.

What could possibly be so terrible, so painful that someone is pushed to taking their own life?

Lets look at an example ...

Errol was fourteen when his life turned upside down. His mother put his dinner on the table, tidied the kitchen and then went upstairs to lie down while he ate. Ten minutes later he heard a noise ... followed by screams in the street outside his house. He ran to the door and looked on in horror as a neighbour screamed leaning over his mother's dead body. She had jumped from a window and killed herself.

Errol was left with so many un answered questions -

### **What do you think were his first thoughts?**

Probably not believing it - no it has not really happened - it's a mistake, that's not my mum ... then .. she didn't kill herself .. she could not have done that ... it must have been an accident.

### **What questions was he left with?**

What happened? Why?

What had made her do it?

Did she mean it?

What could have stopped her?

Was she sad? Was she depressed? Was she ill?

### **He started to look for blame - and felt responsible - was it his fault?**

What could he have done?

What did he not do which might have made a difference?

Did he say something to upset her? Was his room untidy?

Could he have done better at school?



And then felt bad about himself.

Didn't she love him?

And worse ..... Was he such a bad person that she had to kill herself to get away from him?

What feelings did that story bring up for you?

| Feeling | Why? |
|---------|------|
|         |      |
|         |      |
|         |      |
|         |      |
|         |      |
|         |      |

Did you consider

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Sadness - due to | Loss              |
| Denial           | Disbelief         |
| Anger            | Why did she leave |
| Fear             | Alone abandoned   |
| Guilt            | My fault          |

Suppose it was a friend? Someone younger?

Monica's parents did not want her going out with boys - she was fourteen and all her friends were going to a party. Her mother said she could not go - she took tablets - not really to kill herself but more to show them they could not tell her what to do. It was an impulse, she never really thought it out. It all happened so quickly - but despite being rushed to hospital Monica died.



**What was she saying in her 'gesture'?**

I'm angry. You don't understand me. Look what you made me do. It backfired on her - she died by mistake - but her family and friends are carrying the bad feelings, guilt and pain and they will do for the rest of their lives.

Suicide is an aggressive act - it hurts people around us - it leaves behind pain and destruction. It is not just self harm it also harms others - especially harming those close to us.

**Think of an example from your own experience and write down how it made you feel - or if you don't have a true example make up a short story.**

**What happened?**

**How did you feel about it?**





**Suicide is a form of self harm.**

Self harming can cover a lot of different behaviours and the most extreme is suicide. What types of self harming do you know?

Not looking after yourself

Putting yourself in danger or taking risks

Harming your body with drugs substance abuse or alcohol.

Not eating depriving your body of what it needs.

Over eating

Hurting or harming yourself - cutting, scratching.

Suicide 'gestures'

Suicide

All suicide attempts must be taken seriously. A suicide 'gesture' can kill just as easily as a deliberate attempt to die.

All these forms of self harming should be considered as a cry for help. If we do not listen to somebody's pain - maybe they can't communicate with us - they are screaming out for help and don't know how to tell us - and we maybe do not know how to listen. Suicide and self harm comes from a breakdown of normal communication.

## **SUICIDE IS A FAILURE OF COMMUNICATION**

### **Communication**

Breaking silence

Indirect communication

Acting out

Self Harming

Delinquency or Behaviour Problems

HELP !!!



## Myths about suicide

Let us consider some of the myths about suicide.

| Myth                     | Reality  |
|--------------------------|--|
| It takes courage         | It is more courageous to face your life, your problems and stay alive. Suicide is running away - it is usually cowardly. |
| It is a release          | Release from what? To what? Abandonment of others, not path to freedom.  |
| Heroic                   | Cowardly   |
| Role Model               | Selfish copy cat behaviour.  |
| Self sacrifice           | Aggressive hurtful Martyr  |
| gestures are not serious | gestures can kill  |

People can become confused when someone they admire commits suicide. They may want to believe that this was right, it was heroic, a noble gesture. There are examples in history when there was some noble sacrifice made for friends eg when an Antarctic expedition ran out of food Captain Oates walked out into the snow to die so that his friends had enough to survive.

Generally speaking this is not heroic behaviour and should not be copied or praised. This can be tragic - as a boy whose admired uncle was found dead one day - he had hanged himself. The boy could not believe that his uncle would do something like that but he admired him so much - the only way he could make sense of it was to copy his behaviour -so he hung himself too - a double tragedy for his family and a complete waste of a young life. From time to time when someone famous kills themselves a whole group of people may have difficulty coping and try to copy their idol. Causing terrible problems for them and their families and friends.

Sometimes we can try too hard to understand what made someone else do such a thing and that can get us into trouble because our thinking gets mixed up and we don't see the situation clearly.

Let's look at this song about a girl who was unhappy, had problems with her boyfriend and committed suicide. Her friend did not realise how depressed she had been and wrote this song about it. Take a few minutes to look at the words and think about the myths we have been talking about. Write down as many examples of confused or wrong thinking that you can find in the song. What confused feelings are there?



## To Laura.

Why I am crying for you?  
Why am I dying with you?  
Do I look and see my face,  
Is it mine and not your fate  
Will the passing time efface your memory ... entirely.

Could I have been more than a friend?  
Could I ever have altered the end?  
Did you have to go this way  
All alone .. what could I say  
Well at least you chose the day .. to journey on .. where have you gone?

Did you have more courage than me?  
Am I feeling a strange jealousy?  
Well at least you are free  
While life still binds me  
Will your death help me see ..there's no end .. for a friend.

Did you need something no-one would give?  
Would his loving have helped you to live?  
I haven't known you for so long  
But I can't believe you're gone  
How can loving be so wrong ... I'll hold on ... with my song.  
Can you hold on ... to my song??

**Confused thoughts and wrong reasons -**

**Feelings**







The song can make us feel sad and feel sorry for the victim of suicide and of course it is right that we should be sad when anyone loses their lives. But remember not to praise or glorify the dead person and to want to be like them.

Keep a sense of reality - remember their good points and their bad points - but most of all remember that they did this because they were in pain, they were disturbed, upset and could not cope with life. It is a sadness that they were not able to deal with life, that they were not helped to cope with their problems.

The way to defeat and prevent suicide is to communicate, to listen to others and to talk to others when we have problems. The solution is to keep working on our problems, to have the courage to stick with life and to help others to do the same. Not to harm ourselves and those we love by ending the most precious gift we have - that of our lives.

Communicate ...

Communicate ...

Communicate ...

SUICIDE IS A FAILURE OF COMMUNICATION

This handbook has been produced by Dr Diana Birch of Youth Support in conjunction with the peer counselling courses at the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation.

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