

Choosing Life

For much of my adult life I viewed suicide as my ace in the hole. Anytime there was a crisis, whether it was a breakup with a boyfriend or a dispute at work, I automatically thought, "If this doesn't work out, I can always kill myself." Looking back that attitude sounds flippant. But those were not trivial thoughts. I often spent hours figuring out quick, effective ways to kill myself. Today, the joy I experienced knowing I could choose death at any moment



Everyday Spirituality

by Colleen Foye Bollen

seems disturbingly macabre. Back then suicide felt like my only way out of difficult situations. I did not realize that if I was miserable, I had the power to change either the situation or my attitude. I came closest to committing suicide during a time of

deep despair while attending college. Filled with feeling of profound hopelessness I thought would last forever, I was consumed by negative thoughts. Thankfully, a friend dropped by unexpectedly. She talked me through my despondency and helped me

regain a healthier perspective on life.

Although I narrowly escaped paying the ultimate price, this episode did not put an end to my suicidal thoughts. I continued planning ways to end my life.

Then one day while meditating, I had a revelation so powerful that I wrote down the date in my journal: March 11, 2000. That morning I realized that by focusing on suicide I was not fully living. In that instant, I saw my life divided into two parts. Half my attention was turned toward life-affirming actions, the other half searched for the best suicide plan.

From that revelation, a question arose. What if I lived my life without an exit plan? I tried to imagine how my life would change if suicide wasn't an option. What would be different if I had to make this life work until my natural death? My answer: I would be more engaged with life.

Over the next few days, I mulled over my revelation and resolved to shift my focus from dying to living. To help me make this transition, I applied a principle I had successfully used to make other changes in my

life: redirecting my attention. My subconscious mind had shown me it supported change by bringing the issue to my attention during meditation. Now I needed to work with my conscious thoughts.

Refocusing my thinking required considerable effort. Each time I heard the familiar refrain, "If this problem doesn't work out I'll just kill myself," I replaced it with the question, "Since suicide is no longer an option, what will you do to resolve this problem?" With unwavering conviction, I stopped looking for a way out and instead focused on resolving my problems.

As I released self-hating thoughts and embraced my right to change situations that were not working, I began appreciating life more. Nature's palette of colors came into sharper focus. Food tasted more delectable. I became more engaged with my work, the people in my life, and my dreams for the future. By replacing my old suicide refrain with the axiom, "This too shall pass," I learned to release sorrows more easily and allow joy in more fully.

Since firmly rejecting suicide's allure, I have met

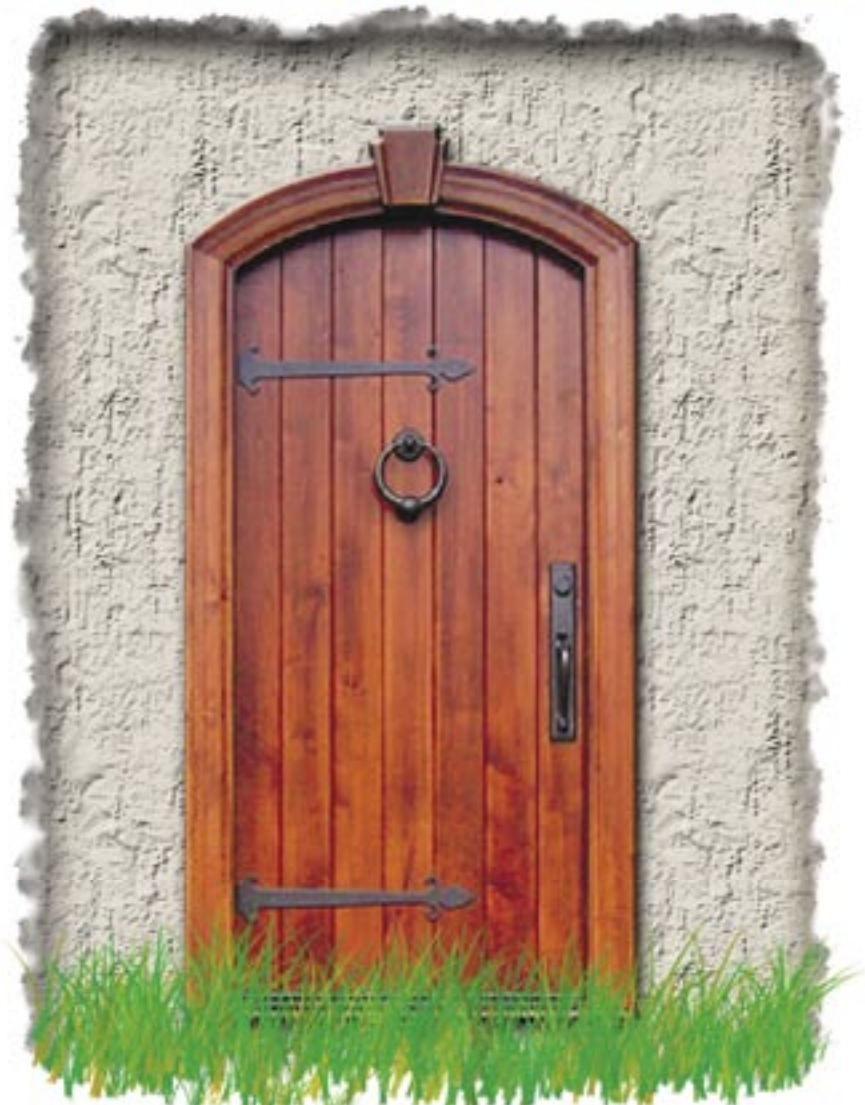
individuals whose relatives and friends killed themselves. Seeing the anguish survivors suffer showed me the terrible legacy suicide leaves behind. I now know that no matter how badly I felt, it paled in comparison to the ongoing grief I would have caused others, had I killed myself.

Today I realize that each person is born for a reason. Yes, there are times of hopelessness, when it is hard to understand one's purpose. Yet, everyone has value and something unique to give the world. And suicide deprives others of that special gift.

If you or someone you know is suicidal call the Crisis Clinic 206-461-3210 or the National Suicide Hotline 1-800-SUICIDE.

Colleen Foye Bollen provides healing treatments for people and animals. Her primary healing modality is Jin Shin Jyutsu, a gentle Japanese acupressure technique that works on physical, mental and spiritual issues to promote optimum health. Colleen is also a reiki master and certified sound healer. For more information go to www.flowingstillness.com or call 206-367-0491.

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