

Are you depressed? Reach out for help

Sometimes I wonder if everyone thinks about suicide from time to time. When life gets really tough, taking one's own life can look very appealing. I went through such a time when I was much younger and facing some difficult times. Fortunately, I was able to reach out to a crisis line and got the support I needed to find other solutions.



This past month an associate/neighbor of mine was not able to do that. He disappeared one day. After many of us who cared about him searched for hours, he was found. He had taken his own life. I don't think any of us have been able to put the pieces together yet and we certainly haven't been able to put it behind us.

He was very depressed and was on medication. All I can think of is the television commercials for antidepressants that warn the patient to call their physician if thoughts of suicide should surface. Nice side-effect of something that is supposed to be helping the depression. Is this what happened to him? Did the medication cause him to get more depressed so that he couldn't see any way out of his difficulties? On the physical plane, we will never know.

The people of the state of Washington recently approved the assisted suicide law that allows people with terminal illnesses to have help ending their own life rather than face a long and painful death. I know several people who are very much opposed to this law because they fear it will allow family members to talk someone into taking their own life rather than pay for expensive, long-term treatments. I guess anything is possible but I like to think that people love their family more than that. Maybe I am naïve.

So, what to do if you or someone you love is so unhappy that suicide starts to look good? What if you know someone who is very depressed and you are concerned about him or her?

The first most important thing is to help the person be with others, even if this isn't what they think they want. Isolation is one of the worst things we can do when we are depressed. The person might make it difficult

for you, but reach out anyway and do whatever you can to have someone with them to help support them to finding a better solution.

Second, it is important to remember that depression is not just an emotional state. It is a physiological condition and people can't just "snap out of it" by thinking happy thoughts. And simply taking drugs is obviously not the answer, either. It is important to reach out to a professional who will take the depression seriously and who is willing to do more than simply write a prescription and hope for the best.

There are so many complementary treatments readily available these days, that it would be a shame not to take advantage of them. Do some research, talk to different practitioners and try to find some sort of support or treatment.

Third, if someone close to you does end their life, the biggest feelings to deal with are guilt and anger. Could I have done more? Should I have seen this person was in this much pain? Could I have said or done something to change their choice of action? Did I say or do something that pushed them over the edge? Didn't they care enough about the people in their life to make a different decision?

It is very important to remember that the person did make a choice, ill informed though it may have been. This was suicide, not murder. We can never truly know the workings of another person's mind. We can never know the big picture of why the person did what they did. Difficult though it might be, we do eventually need to move to the position of accepting they made this decision and honoring this choice. We don't have to like it. We don't have to understand it. We can be angry and

sad and puzzled. And we have to face that this was the decision the person made. It can't be undone.

I remember when my brother found out he had cancer and was given a short time to live (this was before the assisted suicide law was passed). Initially,

he felt suicide was an option for him but eventually he discarded this as a viable

choice. When I asked him what made him decide not to kill himself, he said it was because he believed in karma. He said he was afraid if he took his own life he would have to come back and go through his situation again and he didn't want to do that.

For many people these are certainly troubling times we live in today. For others, these are times of great opportunity. It really does have a lot to do with our point of view. We get to choose to see life as a grand adventure with the ups

and downs and challenges it offers or we can see life as an insurmountable obstacle.

It is my wish that you see it as a great adventure and milk it for every ounce of satisfaction and delight you can find. If you have trouble seeing it this way, reach out for help. I am sure there are people in your life who love you very much and would miss you if you were gone. Give them a chance to support you before you do something drastic that can't be undone.

Krysta is publisher of *New Spirit Journal* and is the author of books and CDs. Her latest CD is called "Positive Self-Talk for Family Caregivers." More information is at www.krystagibson.com.

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Connecting With Your Kids

Continued from Page 1

they never experienced it. Love is something that we have to learn to do. It's a feeling and it's a noun but it's also a verb. It's something we do. And if someone did not do and give loving actions to us we may not have learned to do those loving actions and loving behaviors to ourselves. And that's sad because we first have to love ourselves before we can really truly love other people.

Children never stop yearning to have a good relationship with their parent. I recom-

mend that parents just be open and honest at whatever point it becomes apparent to you that you want to have a better relationship with your child. Sit down and let them know that you miss them and you want to be closer with them and that you value who they are.

To find out more about Dr. Joanne Stern and her new book go to www.parentingi-sacontactsport.com. Judith Campanaro is an artist and art therapist who can be reached through www.judithcampanaro.com.

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