

BOOK REVIEW I

Kathleen Dean Moore, *Wild Comfort: The Solace of Nature*, Boston, Trumpeter Books, 2010, 195 pp.

This is not a book concerned with suicide, suicide awareness or suicide prevention per se. This is a compilation of short, down-to-earth narratives about nature as healer and about living in touch with the earth. Through careful observation, recording and interpreting natural and human creations, Kathleen Moore provides a stimulating account of her adventures with, and in, the wild. As such, she reveals a presence of healing powers as she shares her life-agenda and engages the readers in developing a depth of insight and understanding they might not have otherwise considered.

Moore is "...an essayist, activist, and professor (at Oregon State University) who brings together natural history, philosophical ideas and creative expressions in a search for lasting, loving ways to live on Earth." (About the Author, p. 195)

She spends summers with her husband at their cabin in Alaska, but wherever she travels she is a careful observer of the natural world and brings a sense of wonderment to even the most minute and commonplace objects, events and outdoor activities.

For those seeking serenity and a way forward in their lives, torn and shattered by suicide, Moore's sense of place and purpose offers a way of looking at life and death in a larger context that can help heal the wounds and bring joyfulness.

Just to acknowledge that "nature heals" is not sufficient. We need to go beyond verbiage to action...be it sitting quietly on a log or leisurely paddling down a quiet river with binoculars at the ready. For nature to provide a healing balm we need to know how this transpires and how to become involved. By sharing her own experiences and insights in *Wild Comfort*, Moore can aid in our own search for solace.

BOOK REVIEW II

Thomas Joiner, *Why People Die By Suicide*, Harvard University Press, 2005, paperback ed. 2007, 276 pp.

Thomas Joiner wears three hats – the survivor of his father's suicide, university professor and researcher and clinical psychologist. Throughout the seven chapters of his book he cites and critiques numerous studies and theoretical positions while providing ample anecdotal and clinical evidence and references as he advances his own comprehensive theory of why people die by suicide.

Joiner's theory centers on key concepts of the ability to inflict lethal self-injury brought about by a person's lack of connectedness and ineffectiveness. How one overcomes the basic instinct of self-preservation and the fear of death is central to his thesis that perceived burdensomeness and failed belongingness together can lead to attempted suicide or death by suicide.

He consistently emphasizes the overarching importance of feeling a burden on others and a failure to belong. He examines a diverse array of risk factors such as impulsivity, childhood adversity, mental disorders, serotonin system, genetic make-up, and personality attributes, and also acknowledges that depression exacerbates feelings of burdensomeness and disconnection in potentially suicidal individuals.

A final chapter addresses the responsibility for risk assessment, crisis intervention, treatment, and prevention. Concrete examples are offered of how these actions may be addressed by various professionals.

This book offers suicide survivors, interested citizens and activists, as well as professional personnel a comprehensive examination of facts and factors and a depth of understanding of suicide causation not usually found in the body of work on suicide.

While I have read much on suicide and its causes – attempting to answer the "big question of why" – Joiner provided me a perspective that not only challenged rational considerations, but also engendered a feeling of relief and satisfaction. Thanks to Joiner, I now am better informed about suicide than ever before.

Bud Wiener

BACK IN TIME

Kurt Cobain was the lead singer of the grunge band Nirvana. He was 27 years old when in 1994 he died in the garage of his Lake Washington home in Seattle. He had checked out of a drug rehab center earlier and his body was discovered April 8 by an electrician who came to install security lighting. It was estimated that his death had occurred three days earlier.

Was it suicide or murder? The official report indicated suicide caused by a shotgun wound to the head. The police reported a shotgun lay across his body and a suicide note found nearby.

Family members indicated a pattern of depression and instability prior to his achieving fame. His cousin, a nurse, reported a family history of suicide with two uncles dying by self-inflicted gunshots. She further claimed that he was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and with bipolar disorder as an adult. It was known that he struggled with drug addiction.

Thomas Joiner stated that Cobain had a strong liking for disturbing images in the lyrics of his songs. Joiner also indicated that impulsiveness was involved in his death, though "not in the sense of a spur-of-the-moment decision to die. Rather, his impulsivity led him to experiences that reduced his fear of death."

Tom Grant, a private investigator employed by Cobain's wife to find him after disappearing from the rehab center, was the main proponent of a conspiracy surrounding Cobain's death. His extensive work led him to believe that it was homicide. He presented evidence to support his theory that he was murdered by a perpetrator. But the official verdict of death by suicide remained intact with accounts of Cobain's array of provocative experiences, including repeated self-injury, lending credence and widely reported in the media.

SPRING, 2003 TO SPRING, 2012

This is the 35th issue of **The Lighthouse**, completing nine years of providing a quarterly newsletter to subscribers in our service region in Illinois of Lee, Ogle and Whiteside counties, and beyond...to other addresses in Illinois, several other states, Canada, Austria, and Turkey. Included on our mailing list are individuals (many of whom are survivors), schools and colleges, local and regional social agencies, funeral directors, libraries, churches, medical offices, safety and fire departments, nursing homes, and service clubs and organizations. Currently, 400+ copies of the newsletter are printed and distributed.

Throughout the years we have had the cooperation and assistance of Sinnissippi Centers, Inc. behavioral health care organization by financing and mailing the newsletters, and also by its personnel who has provided expertise and guidance in design, formatting and final layout. For the past several years Andrew Jackson has served in that role, and has been much appreciated.

If you know of persons or organizations who should receive The Lighthouse please submit their names and addresses, or have them do so. We always welcome the opportunity to let others know about suicide, survivorship and prevention.

POLICE SUICIDE AWARENESS COURSE

A 24-hour course in suicide awareness was held in Jacksonville, FL March 19-21, 2012. Recognizing that suicide is the single most lethal aspect of police work, this course was attended by a wide array of law enforcement and corrections agencies personnel.

Primary goals of the course were to understand the suicidal problem and to develop appropriate training programs. Topics included stress management, PTSD, policies and resources, handling a suicidal officer, and helping co-workers and family members. Participants included officers, mental health professionals, peer support personnel, crisis intervention teams, police chaplains, and hostage negotiators.