



The Lighthouse

Touched By Suicide
Survivors Gather

Volume 8 Issue 3

Winter 2011

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Layout

The Suicide Support group gatherings are open to all individuals who have been touched by suicide. The group meets year round on the first Wednesday of the month 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. at Hospice of the Rock River Valley, between Dixon and Sterling at 264 Illinois Route 2, Dixon.

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Newsletter of Touched by Suicide, Survivors Gather

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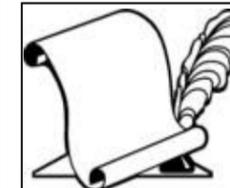
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NEED INFORMATION ONLINE?

An excellent source for suicide prevention, awareness and support information: www.suicide.org, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and website.



From the Editor AS WE SEE IT: WHAT'S MISSING?

This is the 30th edition of The Lighthouse newsletter. I began putting this issue together in early December by sorting, re-reading and listing items that might be included and thinking about how best to make it worth the time it takes readers to absorb its various messages.

Over the past few months I received a few clippings, articles, references, and an occasional letter. But, what I find missing are the stories so essential to the character of this publication. Is it that folks don't sense the need or have the time that it takes? Can it be that all of the stories have already been told? Are there some subscribers whose stories have already appeared who might have more to reveal or who can challenge our audience with an editorial or essay?

The following is worth repeating, in part. It is taken from my Summer, 2004 editorial, "Why Do We Tell Our Stories?"

What does it take to put memories and feelings into words that try to convey the meaning of suicide in a most personal way?

First, it takes a feeling of security that, "I am ready to reach out to help others." Secondly, it takes courage to face past and present realities and to bravely say, "I want others to know." And lastly, it takes humbleness; "That quiet inner voice that is embodied in my heart and character."

Storytellers don't have to be professional writers, they just need to relate what happened in their loved one's lives and/or their lives as survivors.

Please join our family of storytellers and help enlighten the world about lives associated with suicide and survivorship.

I welcome any and all first-timers, as well as "old timers", whose stories and poems appeared in earlier issues. Stories, indeed, are the missing ingredient and should be included in future editions.

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BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

Eighty-five percent of people with Borderline Personality Disorder (B.P.D.) also have another mental disorder according to a 2007 study report. Suicide presents an especially high risk in this population. As many as eighty percent of those with forms of this disorder have suicidal behaviors and about four to nine percent complete suicide.

Proper diagnosis and treatment can help reduce or lessen the symptoms. B.P.D. is considered "a reflection of an essential aspect of a person's character that influences seeing and being seen in the world."

From: **Changing Minds, Newsletter of NAMI Northern Illinois, July/August, 2010**

SUICIDE RISK AFTER HEART ATTACK

People are more likely to die by suicide in the wake of a heart attack, and some are more at risk than others.

In the immediate aftermath of a heart attack the risk of suicide rises dramatically among people with a history of mental illness. These patients are about 60 times more likely to die by suicide than people who did not experience either a heart attack or mental illness.

Even for patients with no history of mental illness, the risk for suicide is tripled in the month after a heart attack - and the risk remains elevated for at least five years. This was true for both men and women, and regardless of socioeconomic status.

Rehabilitation programs for people after heart attacks should take mental health into consideration, along with their physical status. It's also important to ensure that people have social support after such a life-changing event.

From: **Reuters Health Information online, November 30, 2010**

The Lighthouse is published quarterly at no charge. We welcome submission of news items, poems, reviews, and personal stories. Comments and suggestions to the editor are appreciated.

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PREVENTING MILITARY SUICIDES

From 2000 to 2009 more than 1,100 military personnel have died by suicide. They are increasing at a record rate – higher than civilian suicide, and they have been increasing despite intensified prevention programs.

The Task Force on the Prevention of Suicide has completed its year long study ordered by Congress. The task force recommends targeting suicide as a most vital wartime mission. Prevention needs to be more creditable and urgent for military personnel wrestling with depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Condensed from an editorial in the New York Times, 9/2/2010

SUICIDE AT FORT HOOD

In October four soldiers at Ford Hood, Texas fatally shot themselves. There have been fourteen confirmed suicides at the base, while six others are under investigation. The Army and Marine suicide rate has more than doubled since 2005 attributed in part to demands imposed by two wars and multiple deployments.

In 2009, 301 warriors took their own lives following duty in Afghanistan and Iraq. Today the bulk of the military suicides come from the ranks of the Reservists.

TEACHER'S DEATH EXPOSES TENSIONS IN LOS ANGELES

Rigoberto Ruelas was a fifth grade elementary teacher in the L.A. public schools. Recently he died by suicide and his death became a flash point in the debate over school reform.

The L.A.S.D. uses "value-added analysis" of every teacher in the district, with the results published in a local newspaper. Ruelas was rated "less effective than average" and he became noticeably depressed.

The assessment uses improvements in student test scores to evaluate teacher effectiveness, and is supported by the federal Department of Education. Their use remains controversial and teacher's unions argue that this method used alone is unfair and incomplete. However, Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, supports greater transparency in teacher evaluations. The president of the A.F.T. argues for a more comprehensive evaluation rather than student test scores alone.

Mr. Ruelas' colleagues described him as a devoted teacher who tutored students before school, stayed with them after school, and, on weekends, took them to the beach. His family members presume that the rating contributed to his death.

Based on a New York Times article, 11/9/2010

HEADLINES TO CONSIDER

There seems to always be a number of stories in newspapers, magazines, as well as on-line, addressing the concerns and interests of our readers. Here are headlines of some recent stories that were clipped or that were sent to me:

- Death of Petersburg police chief a suicide
- Student opens fire in Texas, kills himself
- Teen's suicide tied to web cast
- Iraq vet kills pregnant wife, daughter, self
- Soldier's suicide tied to problems at home
- Experts fear copycat suicides after bullying

HEADLINES AND MORE

- From the edge of suicide. A suburban mother recounts how her daughter was brought back from despair by family, friends, luck.
- Bullying takes a terrible toll in Ohio town. In one school, 4 teens died by own hand.
- Gurnee's officer of the year. The officer, 41, died October 1st. He took his own life at his family home.
- Priest gets 4 years for assaulting boy. He attempted suicide by jumping from a church choir loft.
- A lifesaving tool turns deadly. Radiation offers powerful new cures, and ways to do harm. A linear accelerator with a missing filter would burn a hole in a breast cancer patient's chest leaving a gaping wound that this mother of two considered suicide.
- Patrol sees spike in suicides. Border patrol agents are killing themselves in greater numbers after four years without a single suicide. At least fifteen have taken their own lives since February, 2008. Administrators have quietly undertaken prevention initiatives with special training for supervisors and educational programs for 22,000 agents across the United States.
- A way out of depression. Coaxing a loved one in denial into treatment without ruining your relationship.
- Dixon police chief tries to help pass "Erin's Law". Erin was six when she was first sexually abused. At 11 she was molested by her 15 year old cousin. Her sister was also molested and the family filed charges. The cousin was given probation. After the ordeal, she began cutting herself. At 16 she attempted suicide.
- Mama Wu is a hero for China's gays. When Wu's teenage son told her in 1999 that he was gay, she told him, "there's nothing wrong with liking boys and its no big deal." She now speaks for acceptance of gays by family members and society. She writes a blog, launched a hotline and founded the first Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in her hometown. There is a high rate of suicide among Chinese homosexuals. Some surveys indicate that up to 30 percent of gay youth try to take their lives.
- Assisting in my parents' suicides. His parents wanted to die on their own terms. When they asked for help, he couldn't say no.
- Civilian soldier suicides alarming. Army: Rate nearly double last year's for National Guard soldiers.