



*Suicide has been, for centuries, a deeply problematic issue. Defining it is difficult largely because one becomes engaged in issues of culpability and intent. Did Jesus commit suicide by allowing himself to be crucified on the cross? Was Paul being suicidal when he expressed a preference for going to meet Christ in heaven over living on earth? Were the Greek and Roman leaders of ancient times breaking moral and ethical codes when they elected to sip poison rather than face execution? Is it wrong, and is it suicide when a woman who is terminally ill and surviving only through the aid of complex technology, requests that the power supply to these machines be cut-off? Was Mahatma Ghandi suicidal when he promised to starve himself to death if changes did not occur in his native India?*

*These are painfully difficult ethical questions that we will not be able to resolve in our life-time. However there is a dimension of suicide that is wholly tragic and the furthest thing from noble and heroic. When suicide is precipitated by the conviction that one's life, despite its promise and potential, is worthless and deserving of destruction, there is something painfully tragic at work. When suicide has been brought on by depression and psychic inertia coming out of a frustration with everyday existence, we who are left living sense that there has been a fundamental violation of human dignity. Even apart from any spiritual consideration, such events fill us with a mixture of confusion, anger and regret.*

*In this week's feature we do not attempt to solve the problems of suicide, instead we examine the life of one potential suicidal victim from the perspective of a close friend. Through this article we hope to come closer to an understanding of why suicide becomes an option for many, and how we may attempt to rescue ourselves and others from such a final and irrevocable end. This is not a handbook on suicide prevention. It is merely the heartfelt expression of concern of one human being for another. People contemplating suicide should feel free to contact emergency help lines for dialogue and help. In Frederickton CHIMO serves this purpose.*

## WHY? WHY DID S/HE DO IT? HOW COULD THEY TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES IN SUCH A GROTESQUE MANNER? DON'T THEY KNOW THAT THE CHILDREN ARE SUPPOSED TO BURY THE PARENTS, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?

These are only a few of the remarks made by friends and family after a person has committed suicide.

People commit suicide, or think about it, for various reasons. The signs are easy to pick up, if you are open and receptive to them. There are a wide range of clues to suicide. These clues are divided into three major categories.

The first category of clues is feelings. Feelings which may lead to a possible suicide are many and varied. They include sadness, despondency, hopelessness, helplessness, loneliness, and guilt. They also include extreme mood changes, apathy, and worthlessness.

Thoughts are also factors in suicide awareness. These include statements like "Everyone will be better off without me," "I can't do anything right", "I can't take this anymore", "I wish I were dead", "All my problems will end soon", "Take this, I won't be needing it anymore", "My thoughts and feelings are so confused, I don't know where to turn anymore."

Actions, if noticed in time, can be an indication of possible suicide. Examples of suicidal actions are fairly noticeable if you allow them to be. If you know someone who suddenly starts to give his/her possessions away, loses interest in their hobbies, if they withdraw from their family, friends, work and/or school, begin unusual behaviour such as self mutilation, do not shrug it off as nothing.

Some people who consider suicide may ask a friend, "Why am I here?" or "What purpose does my life serve?" A person who is thinking of suicide is basically a picture of frustration. However, this is not to say that everyone who is frustrated about school, work, or their personal life is considering suicide.

I USED TO BELIEVE THAT ANYONE COULD SURVIVE ANYTHING that life threw at him/her. This was shattered when a friend of mine tried but fortunately failed to commit suicide.

I began to look into why people tried to commit suicide. I read about the signs and how I could notice them. However, when I thought about

these signs and tried to think about Alex (not actual name). I realized a startling fact. Few, if any of the signs were evident with him.

Alex and I knew each other since grade six. I recently spoke with Alex about his suicide attempt. I wanted to know what drove him to it. The conversation went on for quite a while. The names and places you are going to read about have been changed at the request of Alex. This his his story in his own words.

"In Grade 8, I heard about 'the group' and some of the things they did. I thought they would be interesting people to know and hang around with. I started attending their meetings which were held in various places around the area. The group was involved mainly in parties and "getting loaded". They would often cruise for women, etc. They were also involved in the killing of cats, and the drinking of their blood."

I questioned Alex about why he got involved with 'the group' and what other things went on at these meetings.

"The main reason why I joined the group was, I guess, my parents. I stayed with the group because I was psychotic, on a small scale. Eventually, I became more psychotic. I believe that the group and my being a part of it was to blame.

"Everyone has their troubles, mine is drugs, I was mega into drugs. I don't take crack or cocaine, but I still smoke an occasional joint. I also enjoy drinking, but what teenager doesn't.

"There were a lot of rumors about me taking drugs. Brenda heard many of them. Finally, she told me people were spreading lies about me taking dope. I told her they weren't lies. Shortly after that her mother forbade her from seeing me. Her mother, after a while, allowed Brenda to see me again.

"I talked to Brenda about how I wanted to see her again. She told me the hardest thing I ever heard. 'I've fallen in love with someone else'. I was so strung out from two hits of acid that I pulled out a knife and was going to kill her.

"It was then that I realized that I was too psychotic to live. So, I took the dog chain and leash and jumped off the balcony of the Charles James Junior High."

AFTER ALEX TOLD ME ALL THIS, I HAD MANY QUESTIONS TO ask him. The main question on my mind was about the drugs. "Why did you get involved with drugs and how did you manage to hide it from your friends and family?"

"I started to do drugs after I began to hang out with Allen and his friends. He would ask about once a month if I wanted to try a joint. I usually refused, but one night, I was depressed and upset. He asked and

I said 'What the hell'. It was alright. It didn't seem to hurt me so I continued. As for keeping it from my friends and family, I just acted normal. Like nothing had been going on.

"It was the same with the group. No one knew I was a member unless I wanted them to know. To me, the things I did with the group were great. It was a few people who knew each other getting together to have some fun. I know that I got psychotic with the group. Hell, the members listened to me more than the leader because they knew I was more psychotic. They never dethroned the leader because they needed a figurehead. You know, like the Queen of England."

Alex has, over the years, made many enemies in the area. For that reason, he now owns a jammie. He carries it occasionally. If necessary, he intends to use it as a fear tactic only.

ALEX HAS COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT SUICIDE IS A FACT in his life. If you ask him about his suicide attempt, he will talk about it. This is ironic to me because other suicide survivors tend not to want to talk about it. Maybe Alex is still dealing with his attempt by talking about it.

Alex is continuing with his life. He seems to have dealt with the past quite well. He is looking forward to the future with his new girlfriend, Mandie.

SUICIDE IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER. THIS WAS A HARD article for me to write. Talking with Alex made me realize that even when you think that you know a person, you may not. I knew very little about Alex other than from school and an occasional meeting with mutual friends. If you have a friend that you care about, make sure that the lines of communication are open. Don't wait until your friends tries suicide like mine did.

Most stories are assigned. I asked specifically to write this story. First, Alex is a person I consider a close friend. It was hard for me to deal with his attempted suicide because I never saw it coming. Secondly, I felt that suicide is an issue that is hidden from the public. No one has really been willing to talk about it in an open forum of public discussion. That is not right. Suicide is real and it shouldn't be hidden. People should be more like Alex, willing to talk about it.

There are many people like Alex who were not as lucky. Their suicide attempts were not failures. They left many friends and family members behind. Death is a hard fact of life. Suicide is the hardest form of death to accept and deal with. Most people say "That won't happen to anyone I know, it only happens to other people." I thought the same thing. I never brought the subject up with friends because it never crossed my mind that it could happen. It did. It was then that I got informed about Why. You should too. Don't wait until its too late. Suicide is a serious fact of life and should be addressed seriously.

Rape has recently become a frequent topic of concern on campus. Suicide also should become an issue of more serious discussion. After all, what greater indignity and violation could be inflicted upon the human body than suicide. don't wait until a friend of yours has committed, or tried to commit, suicide before you become aware of the issue. Wake up! Talk about this serious issue. Suicide is an issue that has been on the back burner for too long. It is a serious fact of life that we all must face. Let us face it together, rather than alone.

This story is dedicated to every counsellor, social worker and friend who is there for people when they need them the most.

# "The final Exit"

## Suicide and depression: Personal Reflections

By  
Louis Voutour

