

Teenage Suicide: A Matter of Life

by Janet Grogan

or Death

The following article is the first in a three part series on things that touch the lives of every young person here on the campus of Montreat-Anderson. Today and every day there is a battle going on inside all of us to make it through life. The issues being discussed will be hard to read about and are even harder to deal with. These are some of the factors that steal away precious young lives that could otherwise be happy and fulfilling. Addressing these issues is not an attempt to solve them because they are too big for only a small group of people to handle. But if we can at least bring attention to them then maybe we can make someone's life a little better. It is an attempt to make you, the student body and faculty, aware that there are needs on this campus that must be filled if we are to fulfill our duties as Christians and simply as caring people. Please remember that if you do have a problem with one of the discussed topics, there are any number of people here to help you. Any member of the faculty and staff would certainly feel comfortable reaching out a helping hand. Also around for this very purpose are the RA's and RD's, plus a wonderful array of students and adults in counseling positions.

Each person's participation in the surveys taken will be invaluable to make a difference on the MAC campus. Many thanks to the many people on campus who helped to bring these articles, surveys, etc. together.

Teenage suicide is a chronic illness in our society which needs to be faced by everyone. The facts are extremely alarming. There is not one person that has not contemplated suicide. As Dr. Harold Gollberg has said, "All people are potential suicide victims. If you ask a group of people, 'How many of you have ever thought about suicide?' 30 percent to 50 percent will raise their hands. The others are lying." But the major age group that seems to be most affected by this problem are those from about 10-19 years of age and close behind the are the 20-25 bracket. A young person kills themselves every 90 minutes in America. It is estimated that 400,000 young people a year try. It is ranked as the third largest killer of youth only following accidents and murders. But even this could be disputed because experts suspect that many single passenger accidents may be suicide in disguise. Also many coroners list suicides as accidents to protect the family from shame.

There is a lot of truth and myth surrounding teen suicide. One truth is that usually suicide is surrounded by a loss. Whether it be the loss of a friend, family member, or maybe just the loss of self esteem. Depression is also a number one factor in suicide. As F. Klagsbrun says in Too Young to Die, "A

spiraling divorce rate, chaotic homes, confusion about religious beliefs and moral values, shrinking family groups, feeling of alienation between men and women and between young and old - all these bring pressure and confusion and despair to young people."

Girls attempt suicide three times more than boys. Boys succeed four times more often. Suicidal people have a limited field of vision. They are not

necessarily "crazies." They are usually just people who are in an altered state of mind. The feeling of the loss of control is greatly accompanying the person's thoughts that spur them on to suicide. For instance, how many suicides does one hear of in nursing homes? Not many.

Abused children, people in a family that has already had a death by suicide, one who has already tried before, and those who have simply been raised to believe they are no good are prone to suicide. Suicide is a heavy weighing problem. However, experts believe it one of the most preventable.

It is important that friends and family be aware of some of the major warning signs. Some of these are:

- radical personality change
- loss of interest in usual activities
- physical habit change such as being unkempt or a change in eating or sleeping habits
- a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- drug or alcohol abuse
- thoughts expressed of despair, death, or suicide
- finishing off business like putting things away or saying goodbye to friends and family
- suddenly becoming cheerful after depression because the final decision has been made, which is a form of relief in itself

If you are counseling someone who is suicidal, remember that there are certain things you must do:

- be non-judgmental, calm, and affirmative
- try to find out why
- make the person aware of their own value and your genuine concern for them
- remind them that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem
- don't leave them alone and don't try to do it alone

No one knows why suicide is so prevalent among the young. George



Please send replies to M-AC Box 126.

1. *Have you ever considered suicide?*
 - a. *fleeting thought*
 - b. *seriously considered*
 - c. *made plans*
 - d. *have attempted*
3. *Are you now contemplating suicide?*
 4. *If yes, have you talked about this with anyone?*
 5. *If no, would you talk to someone about it?*
 6. *If so, who?*

Wald put it like this, "I think that we are up against a generation that is by no means sure that it has a future... That is a problem. Unless we can be surer than we now are that this generation has a future, nothing else matters. It's not enough to give it tender loving care...to buy it expensive education. These things don't mean anything unless this generation has a future, and we're not sure that it does."

The following was submitted anonymously.

THE KEY: ONE PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

My life is consumed with fear, anxiety, and despair. I stand in a room alone watching and waiting. I have no control. I am lost in a crowd of millions of people consumed with fear, anxiety, and despair. They stand in their own little rooms watching and waiting. One man stands in a large room very much alone. He stands there consumed with fear, anxiety, and despair. He is watching and waiting. Another man stands in a large room very much alone and very much like the other. He stands there in fear, anxiety, and despair. He is watching and waiting.

Both men hold the key to their fear, anxiety, and despair. One man holds a single book in his hand, tattered and worn it can still be read. Another man holds a gun in his hand, bloody and cold it can still be shot. One man finds the answer in the book. Another man finds the answer in the gun. One man conquers his fear, anxiety, and despair. Another man is defeated by his fear, anxiety, and despair. One man lives. One man dies. My life is consumed with fear, anxiety, and despair. I am given the choice - the book or the gun. Life or Death.

A Simple Poem

by John Smith

One morning I awoke, and I remembered about the battles to fight and the crosses to bear. I became weary and discouraged at the mere thoughts, and I came to realize that I couldn't feel sorrow, pain, anger, hunger, or hatred if I lay there in my hideaway bed, protected from the world with the love of Christ to give me hope in all things. So I attempted to find sleep once more but quickly remembered that those battles must be fought and those crosses lifted victoriously. So I sat up as my heart jumped within me, and I came to conclude that, as well as affliction, neither could I feel happiness, comfort, joy, fulfillment, or love if I lay there in my hideaway bed, unexposed to the world with the love of Christ to give me strength in all things.