

Teen Suicide: A First-Person Message for Teens

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From the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide

I used to think that depression and suicide were things that happened to other people, that the way I approached my life somehow prevented me from becoming a victim of mental illness. I realized just how incorrect that assumption was when my own life was turned upside down by major depression.

I first noticed that something was wrong in 8th grade. Apparently, so did one of my teachers, because she asked me if anything was wrong. Unfortunately, she did so in front of the whole class. From that day on, I put up a wall to protect myself from the embarrassment of having a stigmatized illness. I wore a mask—a façade—to cover up what I was actually going through. I didn't feel comfortable sharing my feelings with any adults in my life at that time.

My depression continued in high school. I was hoping that someone—anyone—would bring up the topics of depression and suicide, so that I wouldn't have to. In school, there were always lessons about alcohol, drugs, and safe sex—but never ONCE were depression or suicide mentioned. Maybe, just maybe, if the adults in my life had been educated in these topics, I would have felt comfortable asking for help, and I would have been spared years of suffering.

But I'm one of the lucky ones. I did get help. I'm here today as the voice of those who are not yet being heard - the child who's sitting in a class full of students thinking he or she is the only one feeling this way...or the teen who can't focus in school because he or she is trapped by the isolation and pain of depression.

Help IS available—ask your friends, your resource staff at school, your parents, or call the suicide hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). The right resources are there—look for them—because they CAN save your life!